

RESTORATION OF PROPHETIC MINISTRY ELEMENTS IN THE  
BLACK CHURCH THROUGH PREACHING, TEACHING,  
AND COLLABORATIVE DISCIPLESHIP

Jeffery A. Lang

B.A. Olivet College, 1986  
M.A., Michigan State University 1999  
M.MIN, Bethel University, 2018

Mentors

Brenda Braam, DMin  
Kenneth W. Cummings, Sr., DMin  
Robert C. Walker, Sr., DMin

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## **ABSTRACT**

### **RESTORATION OF PROPHETIC MINISTRY ELEMENTS IN THE BLACK CHURCH THROUGH PREACHING, TEACHING, AND COLLABORATIVE DISCIPLESHIP**

by  
Jeffery Arnez Lang  
United Theological Seminary, 2022

Mentor  
  
Brenda Braam, DMin  
Kenneth W. Cummings, Sr., DMin  
Robert C. Walker, Sr., DMin

The Southside Church of Jackson, Michigan, partnered with Kenneth Cummings Ministries to explore awareness, perceptions, and understanding of prophetic ministry within the church. The hypothesis is if members participate in teaching, preaching, and discipleship seminars, then their awareness, perception, and understanding will improve. The methodology utilized a mixed-methods approach, including pre/post-tests, focus groups, and individual interviews. The approach incorporated teaching seminars and preaching themes from Luke 4:18. The data suggests awareness and perception are impacted through collaborative teaching and preaching.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

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from Waco, Texas. Thank you for pushing me, praying for me, and just being a brother and friend. Dr. Mary McWilliams, thanks for your wisdom, understanding, and help during the IRB process. I could not have done it without you and Jamal.

To my Contextual Associates, Ben Thomas, Chair of the Trustee Board, and Winston Cummings, Lead Deacon for Worship at Southside Church. I am grateful for your spirit of encouragement and cooperation throughout the DMIN research process and our shared leadership of Southside Church. You are a blessing. To my Professional Associates, Rev. Dr. Major A. Stewart, and Rev. Dr. Tyrone B Martin, as alumni of UTS, your advice and counsel were invaluable. Dr. Edward I. Fubara, Ph.D., and Dr. Edward L. Jones, Ph.D., you are both scholars of Michigan State University and dear friends. Your knowledge of qualitative approaches, along with a knowledge of understanding church groups, provided me with effective data collection models. Finally, to Pastor Rodney S. Patterson, Dr. Lee N. June, Lenroy Jones, Murray Edwards, and Albert T. Kidd, Jr., your friendship and encouragement mean more than you will ever know. Albert, you have been a great friend who encourages and challenges the same conversation. I love you, bother.

I am grateful to Pastor Corey Pryor of Oasis of Love Full Gospel Church and Pastor Darius Williams of the Second Missionary Baptist Church in Jackson, Michigan, for their support, prayers, and facility use during COVID-19. Thanks a million. Finally, my journey could not have been completed without the UTS staff and faculty, who helped me navigate the library and work through the technical hurdles that initially intimidated me. Thank you. I am richer for your kindness, guidance, instruction, and knowledge.

## **DEDICATION**

This is dedicated to my family and many friends who have pushed me along for many years of ministry and academic pursuits. I want to thank my dedicated wife and ministry partner, especially actually known as “Bible Woman,” Evangelist Sonya Ren’a (Renee) Lang. She has displayed great patience in allowing me so many hours, days, and weeks away from our family to write, study, research, and participate in the fall and winter intensive in Dayton, Ohio, and focus groups throughout the country. Thank you for your faithfulness to the Lord and your commitment to our children and church family.

To my children, Brienne Michelle Wade, I will never hold you in my arms or see you again, but you are in my thoughts daily. To my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased, Jeffery Arnez Lang II, and my beautiful and bold daughter, Joy Denise Lang, you have had to live in a fishbowl all your lives. Jeffery, I am proud of the man you have become as both a barber and barber educator. Joy, you are a remarkable young woman and educator. I continue to be proud of your achievements as a teacher in the K-12 education system. Keep impacting those young lives, baby girl! Thank you both for enduring my absences and the hardship of always being under the community and church microscope because of your father’s position.

To my mother and father, who have passed on to glory, thank you for your commitment to raising six children and being patient with that weird one who came long last. You have blessed me with life and wisdom beyond words. You only had an 8<sup>th</sup> grade



education but always hoped that your children would advance further. Well, I decided to push it as far as I could. Thank you for surviving the Jim Crow south and being the people who would not give up. Thank you to my siblings, Terry, Larry, and Cleora, known as Puddin, Johnny, and Gary. Terry, we were never close growing up, but I thank God for our relationship now and your encouraging words of support. Larry, you were a source of motivation when I was growing up. Some of your grit and determination rubbed off on me. Puddin, I miss you so much. You would always boast about your baby brother's education and tell people he has his doctorate. Well, I just wanted to make it real. Johnny, thanks for those years you supported me as an undergraduate at Olivet College and gave me a kick in the rear end when I needed it. Gary, thanks for fighting me in those early years. It instilled a sense of toughness in me. I still think about the time we lived together. You were concerned about me preaching in my sleep. Well, I still preach in my sleep. Although, the sermons are just a little better now. Thanks a million to all of you.

I need to mention four people again, but in a different context, Dr. Major A. Stewart, Pastor Rodney S. Patterson, Dr. Tyron B. Martin, and Pastor Terrence C. Grooms. Major, thanks for being an awesome friend throughout our adult years, particularly during this process. Rodney, you are a friend that sticks closer than a brother. Thanks for believing in me, even when I did not believe in myself. Pastor Martin, you are my dude. Thanks for putting up your finances to help me. I will never forget you for that and can never repay your kindness. Finally, to my brother and friend, Rev. Terrence C. Grooms, you led me to Christ! You are my best friend! You are the best friend a preacher

could ever have. Your phone calls were always right on time. Keep praying for me. I am not done yet! It's time to write.

## **ABBREVIATIONS**

BTD	Baker Theological Dictionary of the Bible
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version
NT	New Testament
OT	Old Testament
SEMA	Southeastern Ministers Association, Incorporated

If the church does not recapture its prophetic zeal, it will become an irrelevant social club without moral or spiritual authority.

—Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., *Sermon Message*  
June 11, 1967, Mount Zion Baptist Church, Cincinnati, OH.

## **INTRODUCTION**

This project has been birthed from the many years of community ministry and my political activism as pastor of Southside Church and President of the Southeast Ministers Association, Inc. (SEMA), Jackson, Michigan. The project thesis is entitled “Restoration of Prophetic Ministry Elements in the Black Church through Preaching, Teaching, and Collaborative Discipleship.” This project has taken my personal ministry of preaching and teaching well beyond the walls of the church and has challenged me, and further has changed me and the ministry of Southside Church in some very dynamic ways. The series of seminars and messages created because of this project are continuing well beyond the six-to-eight-week duration of the project. Through my professional associates, I have already begun scheduling some engagements for church groups, district associations, and clergy associations that may be interested in a renewed perspective and orientation related to prophetic ministry.

Chapter one, Ministry Focus, describes how my ministry interests and skills relate to the needs of my context at the Southside Church and provides a history that has helped form the church's foundation, ministry focus and ultimately helped me formulate the project hypothesis. The ministry context was the Southside Church at 419 East High Street, Jackson, Michigan. This ministry was formed sixty-nine years ago because of a church split of High Street Baptist Church, which produced the Southside Baptist Church,

which is now the Southside Church. Even then, the notion of prophetic ministry created conflict amid the civil rights movement of the 1960s.

Chapter two, Biblical Foundations, explores themes related to the primary scripture of Luke 4:18 that underscore the biblical foundations of helping the oppressed, justice, and the restoration of a prophetic ministry amongst God's people. The chapter provides an examination of elements of the spirit, the calling to preach the gospel to the poor, and an exploration of the biblical foundation of Jesus helping the oppressed.

Chapter three, Historical Foundations, provides an overview of the life, theology, and ministry of Saint Augustine, whose ministry in Northeast Africa helped save the Catholic Church. This church explores the life of Bishop Augustine and his life in Hippo and the challenges he put before the church and those who opposed the church. This section reviews his influence through his debates against the Donatists his many writings, particularly his perspective on preaching and teaching in the local church.

Chapter four, Theological Foundations, explores the theology that influences this project's direction. This section examines the connections and the implications of prophetic ministry to pneumatology, ecclesiology, practical theology, and black theology. Further, it addresses the contextual nature of theology and the need to have a solid theological foundation in relation to prophetic ministry and praxis.

Chapter five, Interdisciplinary Foundations, examines the political implications of prophetic ministry in the black church and its' impact on the church and community. This chapter connects the politics and the piety of prophetic ministry. This chapter addresses the interdisciplinary aspects of prophetic ministry and the multidisciplinary approach needed to effect real change. It sees prophetic ministry from the lens of social action.

Chapter six is the final chapter, which provides the Project Analysis. This section offers specific methodology, project implementation, implications of the data, a summary of learnings, and conclusions and reflections. There is a review of pre and post-test data responses. This chapter provides verbatim transcripts of focus groups and individual follow-up interviews. Further, this information within this section offers the connection between the hypothesis and the seminar intervention presentations.

The implementation section describes the data collection and analysis method, the data outcomes from congregational participants, and focus group and individual research observations. Finally, the learning summary reflected on participants' observational attitudes, and the project's transferability highlights the researcher's journey through the Doctor of Ministry Program at United Theological Seminary.

Finally, this section provides an overview of the latest efforts to network with the Chain Lake Missionary Baptist District Association, Wolverine State Baptist Convention, Southeastern Ministers' Association, Inc., Oasis of Love Full Gospel Church, and the Second Missionary Baptist Church, Jackson, Michigan.

## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **MINISTRY FOCUS**

This document aims to create a project that advances the cause of prophetic ministry. The primary focus of this project was the “Restoration of Prophetic Ministry Elements in the Black Church through Preaching, Teaching, and Collaborative Discipleship.” The goal of the project was to create a Doctor of Ministry Project that could be utilized as a church-based training initiative designed to inform and educate congregants on the biblical, theological, and spiritual foundations of prophetic ministry. The project facilitator hopes to continue the training well beyond the six-to-eight-week project training and data collection process.

Therefore, the researcher-pastor has intentionally reached out to clergy, lay ministers, deacons, associate ministers, associate pastors, and others to teach prophetic ministry's merits through the project curriculum. In addition, there is a specific emphasis on creating forums and discussions that focus on teaching and engaging prophetic ministry in the local churches, conferences, state conventions, district associations, and jurisdictions.

The project title is “Restoration of Prophet Ministry Elements in the Black Church through Preaching, Teaching, and Collaborative Discipleship.” The research focuses on helping participants define prophetic ministry elements, such as preaching, teaching, and community outreach that helps the marginalized and promotes justice. One of the



project's primary goals is to educate congregations through engagement in prophetic ministry seminars and initiating a renewed interest in prophetic ministry within the black church and eventually to the entire Body of Christ throughout the country and the world. The biblical purpose for this initiative is to engage congregants and the community through three to five training to offer an understanding of the biblical and theological proclamation of prophetic ministry as described in Luke 4:18-19 and throughout the bible.

The researcher-pastor sought out literature related to prophetic ministries, such as prophetic preaching, ecclesiology, pneumatology, and practical theology, to support this project hypothesis. Another goal of this project was to investigate attitudes and perceptions related to prophetic ministry and make inquiries related to what participants have been taught and what they have not been taught. The research focused on reviewing issues related to teaching the biblical foundations of prophetic ministry and creating workshops, seminars, or sermons that provided an effective biblical and theological view. Further, the researcher-pastor hopes to educate congregations and clergy who do not have seminary or bible college training in this area. The project examined various ways of preaching and specifically prophetic preaching found in Luke 4:18, Matthew 25, Mark 15:16, 1 Corinthians 9:16, and Timothy 4:2.

Without an understanding of preaching and particularly prophetic preaching, ministers of the gospel may be hindering the church's ability to realize its biblical mandate as it relates to Luke 4:18, Deuteronomy 6:6-9, and Matthew 28:19. The pastor assumes that the research data will be helpful in targeting and developing strategies that will help congregants understand biblical principles and mandates related to the prophetic

teachings of Jesus and the ancient prophets of the bible. Moreover, the researcher believes there is a need to restore prophetic ministry elements in the black church through preaching and teaching.

The project's ultimate objective will be to implement an ongoing church-based training model to help congregations understand their role in prophetic ministry in the twenty-first century.

The researcher-pastor believes that the research data will assist in the development of seminars, workshops, preaching courses, and the development of a curriculum will help congregations embrace the proclamation found in Luke 4:18-19. The themes within the prophetic ministry training included the following:

1. The Biblical Foundation of Prophetic Ministry;
2. The History of Prophetic Ministry in the Black Church;
3. The Prophetic Ministry of Jesus Christ and the Prophetic Purpose of the Church;
4. Nehemiah's Prophetic Ministry of Renewal, Restoration, and Revival; and
5. The Characteristics of Prophetic Preaching.

The first two workshops were provided via Zoom by Dr. Kenneth Cummings, Seminars 3 and 4 were provided face-to-face by Rev. Jeffery A. Lang, and the last one was not attended by any participants. This will be discussed in more detail in the project analysis of the document.

## **Ministry Context**

The ministry context involved in the study was Southside Church, 419 East High Street, Jackson, Michigan 49203. The primary medium used to communicate the gospel in any church is preaching. Over sixty years, solid preaching and teaching have held Southside Church together amid much turmoil. In the last twenty-five years, the preaching and teaching ministry of Southside Church has expanded to include revivals, workshops, seminars, Zoom videos, and conferences. After a contextual analysis of the Southside Church, the pastor realized that the church had underutilized the greatest asset, prophetic preaching, teaching, and discipleship. The contextual analysis revealed that short-term events such as revivals, workshops, seminars, and institutes had had a positive impact on the life of the congregation and the community. In addition, the pastor's ten-year tenure as president of the Southeast Minister's Association, Inc. (S.E.M.A.) has allowed the church to become a place where local clergy received training in areas such as hermeneutics, homiletics, ecclesiology, and bible theology; to name a few.

As a result, the senior pastor of the Southside Church and student within the Doctor of Ministry degree program at United Theological Seminary was and is in a unique position to create and implement a local training initiative that could help restore an understanding of prophetic ministry and praxis within the Jackson community. Further, this training would begin with the ministers and laypersons within the congregation of Southside Church, Jackson, Michigan.

## Demographics

The action research study was conducted at the Southside Church ministry context, located at 419 East High Street, Jackson, Michigan 49203. Southside Church is a National Baptist Convention USA Ministry, Inc. with a primarily African American congregation located on the south side of Jackson, Michigan. The church has approximately sixty-nine active members, with eighty-two members listed on the roll. The church is a part of the Wolverine State Baptist Convention of Michigan, the Chain Lake District Missionary Baptist Association, and the National Baptist Convention, USA, Inc.

The City of Jackson is a part of south-central Michigan. The city is located thirty miles (km 48.28) south of Lansing, Michigan, and is seventy-eight miles (126 km) west of Detroit, Michigan. In addition, it is sixty-six miles (km 107) east of Kalamazoo, Michigan. This makes Jackson a central point in the Lower Peninsula of the State of Michigan, with Interstate 94 as the main transportation artery connecting to Detroit South East and Chicago, South West; and I-27 North. According to the United States Census Bureau, the City has 10.99 miles (28.46 km). 10.87 square miles (28.15 km) is land, and 0.12 square miles (0.31 km) is water.<sup>1</sup>

According to the 2010 Census, there were approximately 33,534 people, 13,294 households, and 7,872 families residing in the city. The population density was 3,085.0 inhabitants per square mile (1,191.1/km<sup>2</sup>). The racial makeup of the city was 71.4 percent White, 20.4 percent African American, 0.4 Native American, 0.7 percent Asian, 1.6

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<sup>1</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, information related to the City of Jackson, MI:  
<http://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/decennial-census/data/>.

percent from other races, and 5.5 percent from two or more races. Hispanic or Latino of any race was 5.3 percent of the population.<sup>2</sup>

Major landmarks include the Jackson Prisons, particularly the central complex, the William Adkins Library, Parks and Trails, and several educational institutions. The educational institutions include Jackson College (formerly Jackson Community College), Baker College of Jackson, and Spring Arbor University. Allegiance Hospital merged with Henry Ford Hospital of Detroit to create Henry Ford Allegiance Hospital, one of the state-of-the-art health facilities in the state of Michigan.

It is possible to provide the ministry needs of the city and those willing to commute from surrounding areas, including Detroit, Ann Arbor, Lansing, Albion, and Battle Creek, based on the geographic data. By implementing homiletic seminars, the project could provide the spiritual impetus to engage the local clergy and congregations to initiate dialogues related to prophetic preaching and praxis. The history of the church has proven that the community has always been interested in visionary preaching and teaching that meet the needs of the people. During the sixty-eight years the church has existed, under the guidance of each pastor, motivation amongst the congregation was more prominent when provided a vision for effective ministry. Lang's vision would be expanded to include implementing a clergy training initiative designed to restore an appreciation for prophetic preaching and praxis in the black church.

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<sup>2</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, information related to racial diversity of the City of Jackson, MI, <http://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/decennial-census/data/>.

### **The History of the Ministry**

The original church body, organized as High Street Baptist Church, split over differences in ministry perspectives regarding utilizing the facility and ministry focus. Some members felt it necessary to start a new church, called “Southside Baptist Tabernacle,” which met at the High Street facility. The matter went to the courts, and the new group moved out of High Street Baptist Church.

A small group was deeply concerned and began to pray and organize themselves. This group met at the home of William H. Walker and Mrs. Katie M. Walker at 1223 Merriman Street in Jackson, Michigan. This original group was comprised of Mr. William H. Walker, Mrs. Katie Walker, Mr. Homer Walker, Mrs. Edith Humphrey, Mrs. Sally Taylor, Mr. David Walker, and Sister Fannie Mallard. Later, Raymond Booker Walker joined the group and suggested they consider reaching out to the new prison chaplain, Rev. Dr. Williams R. Saunders. Later that month, Dr. Saunders and his wife, Mary Saunders, met with the group and accepted their request to help them formulate a new church.

### **Under the Leadership of William Saunders**

On the second Sunday of November 1952, the group organized the Southside Baptist Church called Reverend Dr. William Saunders was bi-vocational and served as the pastor-elect and a prison chaplain. Dr. William Saunders was the first African American prison chaplain in the country and served as an Institutional Chaplain of the State Prison of Southern Michigan on Cooper Street (Also known as Jackson Prison). Later, worship services moved from Mr. Walker’s home to the Lodge building on Adrian

Avenue. They worshipped there for six months. During that time, the property at 419 East High Street was purchased by Mr. and Mrs. David S. Walker. Walker's decision to donate the property to the new group. They dug a hole and essentially began worshipping in a basement cellar. This is now the lower level of the church. The Lord put it on the heart of the founders to continue to expand the church building, and construction of the upper sanctuary began.

In 1964, the sanctuary or upper level was completed, and the Masons of Jackson and Detroit conducted the cornerstone laying services. On the first Sunday of August 1964, twelve years after the church was organized, the physical building was completed. In 1970, the physical structure expansion took place. A generous donation of \$80,000 was given to the church. These funds went towards the construction of a new educational wing. In March 1970, the addition was completed and dedicated to the Lord shortly thereafter.

Rev. Dr. William Saunders served as senior pastor for thirty-five years, from 1952 – to 1987. During Dr. Saunders's tenure, the church established its first church choir in 1953 and the first Missionary Circle led by Mrs. Mary Saunders. In 1955, the first young women's group was formed called "*The Futurettes*," which consisted of Mrs. Betty Johnson, Mrs. Olivia Duling, Mrs. Dorothy Robinson, Mrs. Liza Robinson, Mrs. Wila Ingham, Mrs. Mary Turner, Mrs. Thelma Neeves, Mrs. Edith Humphrey and Mrs. Georgia Anderson. Between 1960 and 1975, the church expanded its community outreach and implemented the following: Missionaries, Mothers' Board, Usher's Board, Pastor's Chorus, the Women's Council, and a weekly Bible Study and prayer meeting. Rev. William Saunders retired from the Michigan Department of Corrections, and later

Dr. Saunders failing health prevented him from continuing his tenure as pastor. Dr. Saunders died shortly after retiring from the Department of Corrections and the church ministry.

### **Under the Leadership of Reverend Joe E. Green**

A year after Dr. Saunders' death, the church called Rev. Joe E. Green, a graduate of American Baptist College from the City of Detroit, Michigan. In May 1987, Reverend Joe E. Green, an associate minister of the Twelfth Street Missionary Baptist Church in Detroit, Michigan, became the pastor-elect of Southside Baptist Church. During his tenure, the church focused on youth development and established a nonprofit organization called "Prod," a food pantry and outreach ministry. Rev. Green also focused on evangelism and specialized youth ministries. Pastor Green is known in the community as a phenomenal preacher and teacher, and he also served as pastor from 1987 until his resignation in December 1992.

In December 1993, the church developed a pulpit search committee. In April 1994, the church called a new pastor, an associate pastor (Rev. Jeffrey Lang) from the Union Missionary Baptist Church in Lansing, Michigan. He officially began his tenure as pastor in May 1994. The official installation was in July 1994. Over 300 people attended the installation service, and Rev. Dr. Melvin T. Jones, the senior pastor of the Union Missionary Baptist Church of Lansing, Michigan, preached during the services. The Rev. Jeffrey Lang and Sister Sonya Renee Lang officially joined the Southside Baptist Church as members and accepted the call to the church as Pastor-Elect and First Lady.



### **Under the Leadership of Pastor Lang**

Under the leadership of Pastor Lang, the church engaged in some extensive renovations. These renovations began with the purchase of two new furnaces, and the focus moved to the sanctuary. Improvements to the sanctuary included new windows, new light fixtures, and carpet, along with a new pulpit and communion table covering. The renovations came to a halt when Pastor Lang suggested the removal of a picture of Jesus embedded in a wall whom he referred to as “Michael Angelo’s cousin.” Rev. Lang argued that it was an icon of the past and was an idol, and therefore not scriptural.

This conflict was a turning point in the ministry, and there was a significant loss of young men in the church. Pastor Lang met with selected members of the official board. He shared his concerns about the cultural and spiritual elements of the painting and shared two scriptures with the official board (Exodus 20:4 and Deuteronomy 5:8), so the official board would understand his position. After the meeting with Pastor Lang, the official board members agreed to support the pastor’s vision and cover the wall painting with the church covenant. After three months of conflict, Pastor Lang presented the same scriptures to the congregation and earned the support of Deacon Hubbert Gammage, who stood up and openly supported the pastor. Later, Pastor Lang and the congregation agreed to purchase a new marquee in front of the building, and the same year a new logo and a letterhead were created.

After these initial conflicts, Pastor Lang realized that he must share the vision before making any significant changes in ministry. The pastor started a vigorous effort to teach and reach out to members more personally. The pastor began visiting members in homes and establishing sustainable relationships with the official board. The pastor began

to bring in external speakers to preach and teach specific issues related to church renewal and spiritual development. One specific area the pastor focused on was the financial stewardship of congregational members. He challenged church members to embrace biblical stewardship. This teaching ministry proved effective. This helped to create the philosophy of teaching first and change later.

Shortly after the pastor began teaching biblical stewardship workshops and implementing a course for it, the church faced a major financial crisis. A member who supported the efforts of the vision donated \$10,000, and tithing increased. The renovations continued with the trustees installing a new sound system and sound booth in the rear of the church and new carpet. The following year roof renovations were completed, and the trustees built a wheelchair-accessible ramp in the rear of the church. Later that year, the church purchased additional land for a parking lot. The following year the church paved the back parking lot. Financial growth allowed the purchase of two new vans and a baby grand piano for the sanctuary, along with a keyboard and drums.

### **Biblical Teaching: The Key to Congregational Motivation**

Pastor Lang found that the key to motivating the congregation was strategic teaching and preaching. Now the church ministries are implemented based on what has been taught from the pastor's vision. While Southside Church's strength continues to be an outreach and teaching ministry, it has been particularly effective in providing services to bereaved families and the preaching ministry during funerals. Southside Church often receives requests in this area, which has become a source of revenue for the ministry.

Even these moments utilize teaching, spiritual formation, counseling, and discipleship to build the body of Christ.

Further, as mentioned earlier, the ministry discusses the creation of forums or workshops related to “African Presence in the Bible.” This was once the heart and soul of Rev. Lang’s teaching ministry. This workshop was more popular in the community and attracted black males to the church through the teaching ministry. Recently, the church official board has urged Pastor Lang to begin this effort again, along with some form of Christian education seminars; and community clergy have requested he restart the clergy classes and workshops.

### **Theological Education**

Southside Church has a history of developing curriculums through the expertise of Pastor Lang and Evangelist Sonya Lang. Southside Church has had twelve-week courses in the Old Testament, which include:

- Introduction to the Old Testament Studies (District and Church course)
- The Book of Genesis (District and Church course)
- The Book of Exodus (church course only)
- The Books of Ezra-Nehemiah (church course only)
- The Books of Psalms and Proverbs (church course only)

Further, the twelve-week courses for the New Testament include:

- Introduction to New Testament Studies (As a congregational and district course)
- The Gospels (Provided as a congregational and a district course)

- The Book of Matthew (Provided only as a congregational course)
- The Book of Mark (provided only as a congregational course)
- The Book of Luke (provided only as a congregational course)
- The Gospel of John (Provided only as a congregational course)
- The Book of Hebrews (Provided as a district and congregational course)
- The Book of Acts (provided as to district and congregational course)
- The Book of Revelations (Provided only as a congregational course only).

Specialized one-day workshops provided outside of the congregation of the Southside Church have included:

- Exploring the African Presence in the Bible
- The Role of the Church in the Social Development of Black Males
- The Role of the Church in the Education of Black Children
- Maximizing the Role of the Church in the Lives of African American Males.

In recent years, the ministry has moved to seminars such as Spiritual Formation, Spiritual Gifts, Spiritual Leadership, and the Biblical and Purpose of Christian Education. The Contextual Associates (official board members) indicated that many new congregants have never had the opportunity to experience or engage in previous workshops. As a result, they were supportive in their efforts to assist the pastor in implementing the training and what was needed to support him.

### **Improvements Needed in the Ministry**

In most predominantly African American churches in Jackson, Michigan, there is a movement toward Sunday morning's praise and worship model. Pastors have discovered quickly that it is the most effective way to grow a church. This is particularly true when it comes to attracting young adults. While this was one of our strengths many years ago, it is one of the areas of great weakness today. The worship hour consists of older adults and very few young adults and children. This is an area where the pastor and church have continued to focus a great deal of prayer and planning.

Another area of weakness has been our prison ministry outreach effort. Although we still have one associate pastor that goes into the prisons and jails. The Associate Pastor is getting old, and it is essential to disciple others who can assist him. Further, in his assessment, he has stated that he cannot do it forever and would like to disciple and train his replacement. This is challenging when considering that we have so few adults, particularly young adults.

The church is developing a nonprofit agency called, The Southside Resource Center Inc. that would allow the ability to create a paid staff position responsible for a community corrections ministry. This position would function in the capacity of helping Ex-Offenders transition from prison back into the community with the appropriate support systems.

The church is making efforts to expand and improve the teaching ministry. As mentioned earlier, the pastor would like to establish a more formalized curriculum and or seminars that would allow leaders and congregational members the opportunity to receive college and seminary-level training. These areas would include Biblical Theology,

Spiritual Formation, Christian Education, Missions, and Parish Ministry Studies.

Potential institutional partnerships include but are not limited to Moody Bible Institute, Bethel University (Indiana), Great Lakes Christian College (Michigan), and Ecumenical Theological Seminary in Detroit, Michigan.

The pastor and key church leaders have developed a loosely structured institute where the church has been able to offer courses to both church members and the community at large. Another partnership created is the Pastoral Leadership Institute (PLI). There are at least two leaders interested in pursuing training through the PLI, which is an online educational service provided through Bethel University and The Missionary Church USA, Inc.

### **The Future of Southside Church**

The future of Southside Church must include a campus ministry, high school ministry, and an ongoing schedule of college-level courses in Theology, Missions, Christian Ministries, and Bible Theology. It will include re-establishing the nonprofit arm of the church through the Southside Resource Center, Inc., which will house the A.C.T.S. The program, a prisoner outreach, and a community development project. It will also collaborate with a seminary or bible college to establish accredited programs for congregational members to pursue certificates and degrees. In the future, the pastor will meet with faculty at Ecumenical Theological Seminary to discuss potential partnerships, proposals, and funding sources. Rebuilding the facility is not enough. There must also be a rebuilding of faith and hope within the congregation through teaching, seminars, and small group ministries, specifically teaching related to prophetic ministry.

### **The Present Ministry Context**

Presently, the ministry staff consists of three pastoral leaders, Rev. Jeffery A. Lang, Senior Pastor, Rev. Michael L. Cain, Associate Pastor for Christian Education and Missions, and Rev. Jimmy Jarrett, Sr. Associate Pastor for Congregational Life and Prison Ministries. Pastor Lang oversees all ministries and administrative issues related to the church and supervises the trustees and deacon board ministry. Rev. Cain oversees the Sunday school, morning worship, and food pantry ministries. Rev. Jarrett provides visitation to persons in nursing homes and hospitals, and he has often provided follow-up in cases of bereaved families.

### **Renewal through Teaching**

Pastor Lang is the primary preacher and teacher, but all clergy staff participates in this effort. In addition, the pastor's wife is an ordained Baptist Minister, whom the church refers to as Evangelist Sonya Lang. Evangelist Sonya Lang has provided oversight for the Home Group bible studies, children's church, and in past years the puppet ministry and also serves as an alternate leader for worship and teaches in the Bible Study.

For the last five years, the ministry has been rebuilt from the ground up. Unfortunately, there was a major split due to a sex scandal perpetrated by an associate minister. It effectively split the church, losing our millennials, youth, and children. Through House Groups or what the pastor refers to as Small Group Ministries, growth is slowly returning, but assistance is needed in this area. The contextual analysis has identified that the key is getting back to workshops and seminars and even bringing in guest speakers who emphasize the vision.

The weekly Sunday school at 9:30 a.m. and worship services at 11:00 a.m., both held in the sanctuary, are not enough. Midweek Bible study and prayer time is effective yet again, not enough and, for some congregants, too traditional. Worship is more energetic with a new praise team and male chorus called “Sons of Thunder.” The old traditional Pastor’s Chorus continues to sing but is not as effective as the other music ministry initiatives. Currently, there is no Minister of Music. However, this is something being considered for worship with budget support in the future. Even with this effort, teaching the biblical nature of music is needed as a reminder of how music ministry is vital to the vision of church growth.

### **Current Southside Church Ministry Initiatives**

Effective Southside Church Ministry initiatives include the following:

- Tuesday at 5:00 p.m. A.C.T.S. “Academic Community Tutoring Service”
- Sunday at 11:30 a.m. Facebook Live Worship Message from Pastor’s home and sometimes the sanctuary on Sunday morning.
- Wednesday at 6:00 p.m. combined Small Group prayer time and bible study
- Thursday at 7:05 p.m. Facebook Live Teaching Ministry from Pastor’s Home Office.
- Every 4<sup>th</sup> Saturday from 11 a.m. – 12 p.m. A Food Pantry Ministry

These ministries are restarting in 2021 and will continue throughout the year.

Congregational members understand the biblical nature of what they do and now more constructively embrace missions and other ministries. These ministry efforts are creating opportunities for both spiritual and numeric growth.



### **A Specialized Teaching Ministry**

The greatest strength of the Southside Church ministry continues to be the preaching, teaching, small groups, and outreach ministries. The ministry implemented and administered spiritual formation studies through Sunday morning preaching, Midweek Bible Study, and the Facebook Live Bible Study. Some congregation members have requested the pastor consider reinstituting workshops and seminars. These seminars will be provided through both church in-reach and community outreach.

The pastor believes that a teaching project can be developed through the Doctor of Ministry Program at United Theological Seminary. This action research project comprised an eight-week research process that included training themes related to prophetic ministry. In addition, it involved administering a pre and post-test, engaging in focus group discussions, and a targeted selection of individual congregants for interviews to assess congregants' knowledge, perceptions, and awareness of prophetic ministry. The data from this process is documented and utilized in chapter 6 of this document. This data has been essential in confirming the initial hypothesis of the project.

### **Background of the Researcher**

The pastor's background and formative years of education through elementary, middle school, high school, college, and graduate school have uniquely prepared him for this project. Jeffrey Arnez Lang was born and raised in Muskegon, Michigan. The pastor grew up with five brothers and one sister in a one-bedroom apartment on the corner of Jackson and Langley, at 612 Jackson Street, Muskegon, Michigan, in an area called "Jackson Hill." The pastor's parents, James and Joann Lang, migrated from the cotton

fields of Columbus, Mississippi, during the Vietnam War, and both had only an eighth-grade education. This would later motivate me never to quit when it came to school.

In the fall of 1969, Jeffrey A. Lang entered Froebel Elementary School and began kindergarten. Jeffrey A. Lang's teacher, Sallie Wabalda, was very passionate about all kids, and the assistant teacher was Mrs. Smith, who lived in the neighborhood. Both were Christians, and the researcher did not fully understand the teachers' influence and impact until the researcher was an adult learner headed to graduate school. Nevertheless, the love of these two teachers gave the researcher an example of what the researcher would later become as an educator.

Mrs. Wabalda referred the researcher to a speech therapist because of difficulty pronouncing certain words. The researcher was initially upset and did not understand why speech therapy required a student to leave class and go with these other kids and this "other teacher," as the researcher called her. The researcher's speech therapist introduced the researcher to comic books and required the researcher to read aloud to learn to enunciate his words. This increased the researcher's vocabulary skills and enhanced his public speaking abilities despite his shyness. Froebel Elementary provided two other Christian role models, Mr. Blackman, ironically, my first black male teacher. Mr. Blackman taught fifth grade (1974 – 1975) and Mrs. Glover, my first black female teacher (1975 – 1976), taught sixth grade. The researcher admired them both and feared them equally. They made no secret of their faith. Both had a deep passion for reaching and teaching children regardless of color.

By the fall of 1976, the pastor was in middle school at Walter B. Steele Jr High School; it felt like the pastor was going to college. Mr. Robert Gibner, another English

teacher, became very instrumental in the researcher's development. The researcher got into trouble selling and smoking marijuana for a brief period. However, the pastor's father's intervention stopped that quickly. Later, the researcher got involved with sports. This gave him a sense of confidence, continuing during his high school years.

In 1979, the pastor became more spiritually engaged in reading about various religions and getting involved in community events. These experiences would later help shape the researcher's college experience. Upon graduating from Muskegon High School in 1982, the researcher met two men who would change the researcher's life forever: Professor Bill Selden and Dr. Lowell F. Walsworth. These men had the most significant impact on the researcher's ministry and focused on inclusion. Later Dr. Melvin T. Jones of Union Baptist Church would fill in the missing ministry, character, theology, and personality. These men significantly impacted the perception Pastor Lang developed related to prophetic ministry.

### **Ministry Development**

During the years at Union Missionary Baptist Church (UMBC) in the late 1980s, the researcher learned to understand ministry and even preaching. The entire UMBC experience, from preaching to planning in the Youth Department, was preparation for pastoral ministry. The individual training in scripture, the book of revelation, and hermeneutics was extensive and focused on a local church. The researcher participated in the Institute of Training and the Chain Lake District Missionary Baptist Association, Inc., along with the Capital City District Missionary Baptist Association, Inc. There was a connection with the Moody Bible Institute and the Urban Ministries Youth Conference.

This experience provided the impetus for the vision for church-based workshops and seminars.

While at UMBC from 1987 to 1993, the pastor had an opportunity to serve as an on-call hospital chaplain at two local hospitals, a prison chaplain, and even a police chaplain as well as a campus minister. Through the pastoral care ministry, the researcher was able to assess his strengths and weaknesses; and embrace a more viable formation.

### **Professional Development**

It was also during this time the researcher took courses in hermeneutics and marriage and family ministry from both Calvin Theological Seminary and Grand Rapids Baptist Seminary (now Grand Rapids Theological Seminary). The pastor's entire professional and ministry life has been a bi-vocational professional serving as a youth pastor, social worker, senior pastor, and educator. The pastor's professional development has presented great rewards and challenges.

During his tenure at Michigan State University and Jackson Community College, he received training in leadership development, diversity, management, and labor relations. In 1994, the researcher became the senior pastor of the Southside Missionary Baptist Church of Jackson, Michigan, now Southside Church of Jackson, Michigan. The Southside Church has had only had three pastors since the church was chartered in November 1954.

Pastor Lang has continued his secular and ministry education, securing a Master of Arts in Adult & Continuing Education from Michigan State University (MSU) and a Master of Ministry from Bethel University. Prior to being accepted into the DMin

Program at United Theological Seminary, the researcher completed the course work towards a Ph.D. in Agricultural and Extension Education Systems at MSU but never finished the dissertation. Lang began working towards an M.A. in Theological Studies at Bethel but suspended those studies to pursue a Doctor of Ministry degree in prophetic preaching and praxis from United Theological Seminary (UTS) in Dayton, Ohio. As a result, it has given birth to this project of Restoring Prophetic Ministry Elements in the Black Church through targeted preaching and preaching and collaborative discipleship.

### **Pastoral Ministry and Ministry Development**

Lang has noticed that the Lord used every single experience, good and bad, to carve him into the best possible servant to be utilized in pastoral ministry. Everything from the pain of college experiences to the lessons learned at UMBC. It has all contributed to the researcher's passion for teaching, preaching, and approaching ministry. For example, the researcher feels pastoral care is an area of weakness, but the church members disagree and see it as a strength.

Between 2002 and 2005, the church experienced remarkable numeric growth. Lang wanted to believe this equated to spiritual growth as well. However, numbers mean nothing when people have agendas and are not living for the Lord. Further, the pastor recognized that sometimes churches swell instead of growing. Actual growth is spiritual, not just numerical. As a result, the Southside Baptist Church has become the new Southside Church and embraces a prophetic ministry model of community outreach.

### **Experienced Practitioner Scholar**

Pastor Lang served as the Principal Investigator on the project and was well suited for the task based on his background as a research analyst with a private sector firm in Detroit, MI., Research Associate for Western Michigan University's Alcohol and Drug Initiative as well his experience as a grant writer on various project, including but not limited to mini-grants for both Union Missionary Baptist Church and Southside Baptist Church. Further, Pastor Lang's experience with the ministry context of the Southside Church for over 25 years has allowed him unique access to the congregation. Lang is an experienced researcher and an adjunct professor at Lansing Community College (LCC).

### **Experienced Workshop Presenter/Researcher**

Pastor Lang's experience includes conducting research at the Ph.D. level at MSU. He has been a workshop presenter for the Conference on the African American Family in Huntsville, Alabama, and MSU's Conference on the Black Male. Further, he serves as Program Faculty Chair for Professional Writing and Adjunct Instructor of Corporate Training and Continuing Education at LCC. Lang believes that upon completion of the UTS Doctor of Ministry degree requirements, the pastor will utilize the thesis data to develop a permanent curriculum for Prophetic Preaching and Praxis to local preachers and pastors. There is already collaboration between the Southside Church and the Southeastern Ministers Association, Inc. (SEMA). In addition, the pastor holds a Master of Arts in Adult and Continuing Education and has created curriculums for the church and the Chain District Association. He has also developed curriculums and courses created for GM/UAW Chaplaincy Program and the Wolverine State Baptist Convention's

Congress on Christian Education. These combined experiences helped the pastor in the action research process.

### **Conclusion**

The pastor is confident that through the Doctor of Ministry Program at the United Theological Seminary, this project will go well beyond the anticipated project timelines and will be a permanent part of the ministry community of Mid-Michigan. The action research portion of this project has produced some relevant data. It has been a challenge to both the pastor and the church as we embrace and engage the practical theology of restoration of prophetic ministry through preaching and teaching as well as utilizing methods of collaboration.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **BIBLICAL FOUNDATIONS**

#### **Introduction**

This chapter examines literature related to the biblical foundations of prophetic ministry and prophetic preaching and attempts to help understand the need for the restoration of prophetic ministry elements in the church through a more biblical lens.

The primary scriptural focus is Luke 4:18-19, which references Isaiah 61:1-2. To understand the nature of prophetic ministry, it is necessary to understand the role that Jesus has within the biblical text. The authority of prophetic ministry rests in a biblical understanding and a hermeneutical examination through the exegesis of Luke 4:18-19. This is important because this scripture supports the validity of prophetic ministry through preaching and teaching. This helps create spiritual formation and expand hermeneutical insights, which are important in restoring prophetic ministry in the church. Thus, the chapter explores literary aspects of the text, some historical implications, major themes, and a word study specific to the biblical text.

The purpose of reviewing the literature is to provide a biblical connection and understanding of prophetic ministry. The literature seems to suggest that prophetic ministry is connected to preaching and is multidimensional and must be biblically sound



and socially relevant. The historical implications also provide a more incredible opportunity to understand the major themes surrounding the significance of this biblical text.

### **The Purpose of Selecting Luke 4:18**

The selected scripture embodies the essence of restoring prophetic ministry through preaching and teaching, particularly the teaching of Jesus assigned by God Himself. First, Jesus makes a courageous boast and stands as one who has fulfilled prophecy. Then, according to Luke 4:17-21, Jesus is in a synagogue in his hometown and read comes forward, reads the scroll that is on the pulpit, and then finds the Isaiah passage and reads the prophetic passage of scripture below:

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord (Luke 4:18-19 NRSV).

When Jesus reads this passage of scripture, He claims to be the embodiment of all scripture and prophecy. After Jesus had read the passage, he closed the book, or if we see this within its' true context, he rolled up the scroll and gave it back to the attendant and sat down. But before he sat down, Jesus boldly proclaimed that he was the promised Messiah, and his ministry is defined by sharing and establishing the good news of the gospel. Luke's Gospel makes it clear that he passes this same ministry to His disciples in Luke 9:1-2 and later to the entire church in Acts 1:1-2. Biblical scholars seem to believe, more specifically, that within this passage, the prophecy in Isaiah 61:1-2, Jesus is describing the deliverance of Israel from exile in Babylon as it relates to the Year of Jubilee, but with the ultimate fulfillment coming within the messianic age.

As a result, Luke 4:18 is the perfect foundational text for this project because Jesus indicates that the Isaiah prophecy is now fulfilled based on His presence. Furthermore, he ushers in a mandate to help the poor, the oppressed, and the prisoner. This biblical mandate is essential to restoring prophetic ministry in the church.

### **Literary Elements of the Text**

#### *New Testament Exegesis Luke 4:18-19*

As mentioned previously, Jesus is quoting a significant piece of prophetic literature related to Israel's deliverance from Babylonian captivity. This release from this nation's oppression had not been fulfilled because they were still an oppressed people but now living under Roman oppression and rule in ancient Palestine. This has led many scholars to believe that Isaiah must have been referring to the future Messiah. Thus, Jesus proclaiming himself to be Messiah was offensive to those present in the synagogue who only saw Jesus as the son of a carpenter and not a deity.

Luke Timothy Johnson contends that Jesus is a prophetic messiah and is shown clearly in the story of his rejection in Nazareth (Luke 4:16-30). Johnson further argues that the nature of his Messiahship is to proclaim deliverance to the outcast and afflicted, bringing to completion (or fulfillment) the prophetic ministry of the Isaianic Herald. Hence, he believes that Jesus is a prophetic messiah. Johnson suggests that Luke expands and refines the notion of prophetic fulfillment by not only the events of Jesus' ministry,

death, and resurrection fulfill the Scripture; but also stages of the church's life and mission are among the things "fulfilled among us" (Acts 3:24;13:40; 15:15; 28:25-27).<sup>1</sup>

According to the Expositor's Bible Commentary, Luke emphasizes that Jesus was in his hometown by the words "where he had been brought up." Luke stresses Jesus' Jewish piety with reference to his custom of synagogue attendance. This strengthens the contrast with his rejection. Luke does not say whether Jesus has publicly read from the Scriptures before, nor does Luke say whether Jesus chose Isaiah 61:17 himself or whether the passage was assigned for Sabbath (cf. Notes). The passage was Isaiah 61:1-2, with the words "to release the oppressed" taken from Isaiah 58:6. The variation from the usual wording may simply reflect the interpretive translation used at that time.<sup>2</sup>

The Exposition Bible Scholars further argue that the quotation has significance, both our Lord's statement of his call to his saving ministry and Luke's affirmation of the ministry and this ministry as thematic in his Gospel. In saying, "Today, this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing" (v.21), Jesus identifies himself as the subject of Isaiah's prophetic word. As such, they argue the following: He is the bearer of the spirit (v.18); (2) the eschatological:

1. prophet, proclaim of the good news; and (3) the one who
2. brings release to the oppressed (a messianic function) His
3. role as the suffering servant is not specified here, but an
4. association may be assumed on the basis of the place of
5. Isaiah 61 among servant passages.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Luke Timothy Johnson, *The Writings of the New Testament*, 3rd (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2010), 202.

<sup>2</sup> Johnson, *The Writings of the New Testament*, 194.

<sup>3</sup> Frank E. Gaebelien, *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, Vol. 8, Regency Reference Library (Ft. Wayne, IN: Zondervan Publishing, 1984), 866.

Exposition Bible Scholars further state that we see here that Jesus's ministry will be uniquely marked by the presence of the Spirit as prophetically foretold. His role as an eschatological prophetic is intertwined with that of John the Baptist as a prophetic forerunner. It is important to note that Jesus, not John the Baptist, was the prophet predicted in Deuteronomy 18:18 (cf. John 1:19 – 24, esp. v. 21).<sup>4</sup> Further, Exposition Bible Commentary scholars contend that (Luke 4:18) is the prophetic mission described by Isaiah, a mission of proclamation, and this mission is accepted by Jesus of Nazareth – despite the obvious opposition.<sup>5</sup>

What scholars have pointed out is that the prophetic role of Jesus overlaps with his role as Messiah, his ministry of deliverance is a part of his messianic character. This is assumption probably lay behind the doubts of John the Baptist when his release from prison was not forthcoming (Luke 7:18-19).<sup>6</sup>

The disciples of John reported all these things to him.  
So John summoned two of his disciples and sent them  
to the Lord to ask, Are you the one who is to come, or  
are we to wait for another? (NRVS)

The good news that Jesus was to proclaim was used frequently throughout the book of Luke and was initially shared in (Luke 1:19). The terms used in the text are significant to the culture of the time. The “poor,” like the “prisoners,” the “blind,” and the “oppressed,” are not the unfortunate of this world but those who have special needs of dependence on God. The words to release the “oppressed” filled out the meaning of the

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<sup>4</sup> Frank E. Gaebelien, *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, Vol. 8, Regency Reference Library (Ft. Wayne, IN: Zondervan Publishing, 1984), 867.

<sup>5</sup> Gaebelien, *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, Vol. 8, 867.

<sup>6</sup> Gaebelien, *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, Vol. 8, 867.

previous words. Luke 7:22 cites some ways Jesus fulfilled this mission. This was the theme of Jesus' ministry. He was to preach the Good News and the favor of God that would be realized through his death and resurrection.<sup>7</sup>

The "year of the Lord's favor" (v.19) is reminiscent of the Jubilee (one year in every fifty) when debts were forgiven and slaves set free (Leviticus 25:8-17). It means a time in history when God, in sovereign grace, brings freedom from guilt and the effects of sin. In summary, Luke presents the quotation and Jesus's ensuing comments as a programmatic statement of Jesus' ministry. As a prophet and Messiah, he will minister to the social outcasts and needy, including Gentiles hence, Jesus is a prophetic preacher.<sup>8</sup>

#### *Old Testament Exegesis of Leviticus 25*

However, an examination of the passage reveals that Jesus is reading and quoting Isaiah 61:1, 2, hence a connection to the Old Testament (OT). Within this OT passage, the Prophet Isaiah provides a vision of Israel's deliverance from exile in Babylon as a Year of Jubilee when all debts are canceled, all slaves are usually freed, and all property is given back to their original owners. This was established in the Old Testament book of Leviticus, chapter 25. According to Leviticus 25:1-7, the Sabbath year provided one year in seven for the land not to be plowed or damaged in any way. Today, this practice is called crop rotation, and it would probably be a good way for the ancients to manage their resources. It is God's way of reminding the people He is their provision.

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<sup>7</sup> Gaebelein, *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, Vol. 8, 867.

<sup>8</sup> Walter A. Elwell & Robert W. Yarbrough, *Encountering the New Testament*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2005), 102.

The remainder of the passage seems to focus on the Year of Jubilee. According to Leviticus 25:8-17, The Year of Jubilee was celebrated every 50 years, and this included canceling debts, freeing all slaves, and returning land to the original owners. Further, in verse 35 of the passage, there is an emphasis placed on helping the poor, orphans, widows, and individuals with disabilities. This assistance was to be offered to the poor without charging interest or exploiting them (Leviticus 25:8-17, NRSV).

### *Old Testament Exegesis Isaiah 61:1-2*

According to Isaiah 61:1-2, God called His anointed leader-servant to preach good tidings to the poor, to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord. It is God who anoints and prepares this individual for service to the Kingdom of God. While this section will provide an explanation related to the historical and cultural issues associated with the text, it will also attempt to define and discuss anointing. It would appear that in this passage, anointing enables God's servant to speak supernatural works (preach) and perform prophetic tasks He has called them to do. Below are what OT scholars tend to focus on and examine:

1 The Spirit of the God is upon Me because the Lord has anointed me; he has sent me to bring good news to the oppressed, to bind up the brokenhearted, To proclaim liberty to the captives, and release to the Prisoners; 2 To proclaim the year of the Lord's favor, And the day of vengeance of our God; To comfort all who mourn, 3 To provide those who mourn in Zion – To give them a garland instead of ashes, The oil of gladness instead of mourning, The mantle of praise instead of a faint spirit. They will be called the oaks of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, to display his glory (Isaiah 61:1-3).

However, when Jesus is in the synagogue at Nazareth (Luke 4:17-20), it is significant to note that Jesus is referencing Isaiah 61:1, and he only quotes verse 1 and

part of verse 2. Still, OT scholars argue the first three verses are connected. The anointed healer and messenger of freedom and comfort is embodied in (Luke 4:1-3) and not just verse one. Further, this shows the significance of Jesus' Ministry of the nations (Luke 4:4-7).

In addition, these verses (Luke 4:1-3) present a picture of a man anointed to by the Spirit of God, especially for the task of preaching (Luke 4:1; 1 Kings 19:15-16). He proclaims glad tidings (cf. Luke 40:9; 41:27; 52:7).<sup>35</sup> His anointing with the Spirit of God provides a link with both the kingly and servant prophecies of the Book of Isaiah (see Luke 11:1; 42:1). Expository Scholars contend that if he is both King and Servant, then already within the book, that union of two in Jesus is anticipated.<sup>9</sup>

Further, Expository Scholars argue that those benefiting from the preacher's message are described as the poor, the brokenhearted (cf. Ps 147:3), the captives, and the prisoners.<sup>10</sup> The poor may be literal people, and the word probably has overtones of piety as well as poverty [(that is, Psalms 40:17; 72:12-14)]. They indicate that the brokenhearted appear again as those who mourn and grieve. They could be mourning for sin (cf. 57:15) or over the destruction of Jerusalem, though this was punishment for sin. The poor and the mourners reappear in the Beatitudes of Jesus [(Matthew 5:3-4)].<sup>11</sup>

The captives and the prisoners are likely to be the Exiles, and thus there are overtones of a New Exodus that are still present. In the ancient Near East, the freeing of

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<sup>9</sup> Gaebelein, *The Expositor's Bible Commentary Vol. 6*, 867.

<sup>10</sup> Gaebelein, *The Expositor's Bible Commentary Vol. 6*, 333.

<sup>11</sup> Gaebelein, *Expositor's Bible Commentary Vol. 6*, 333.

prisoners (from debtors' prison) as an act of justice often occurred in the first or second year of a new king's reign (and then periodically after that). For example, the Old Babylonian King Ammisaduqa (seventeenth century B.C.) canceled economic debts on behalf of Shamash. Thus, the "Jubilee" in this case was primarily concerning those in debt (for either financial or legal reasons) and for the freeing of debt slaves.<sup>12</sup>

However, unlike that of Israel, this Babylonian edict was entirely at the end whim of the monarch, and there is no evidence that it was divinely sanctioned. For an example of this as being accomplished by an ideal king, see comment on historically, a proclamation of freedom is freedom recorded by the last king of Judah, Zedekiah [(Jeremiah 34:8–10)].<sup>13</sup> Expositor Scholars suggest that the first two lines of verse two are important. First, there is the term *goel* "Redeemer" that does not appear in this passage, but in the OT, the Year of Jubilee – when slaves were set free and land was returned to its original owners – was closely linked with legislation providing for the kinsman-redeemer (Leviticus 25); and the, in fact, the same word was used in relation to the avengers' blood (that is, Numbers 35:12). In fact, moreover, the Hebrew word translated "freedom" in verse 1 is *d'ror*, a technical term for the Jubilee release in the Old Testament found in (Leviticus 25:10, 13; 27:24; Jeremiah 34:8-10; Ezekiel 46:17).<sup>14</sup>

According to Expository Bible Commentary, God presents himself as both Savior and the Judge. It is often felt to be significant that Jesus, in quoting these verses, stopped before the reference to the day of vengeance. Theologians have raised questions about

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<sup>12</sup> J. Walton, V. H. Matthews and M.W. Chavalas, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: Old Testament* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 639.

<sup>13</sup> Gaebelein, *Expositor's Bible Commentary*, Vol. 6, 333.

<sup>14</sup> Walton, et al., *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: Old Testament*, 639.



this, and they point out that Jesus did include the idea of divine vengeance in Luke 18:7–8. Scholars suggest, “*Jesus, like any other rabbi, quoted enough to call the whole passage to mind.*”<sup>15</sup> They argue that the threefold bestowal promised in verse 3 expresses the same basic idea in different ways. Ashes were symbolic of deep sorrow, and the crown, oil, and garment all suggest preparations for a joyous festival.<sup>16</sup>

The “oaks of righteousness” are an allusion to Isaiah 60:21, but with the thought, it seems more individualized. Expository Bible Scholars contend that if Matthew 15:14 is based on this, then it is because the Pharisees were too concerned with the display of their righteousness and not the glory of the Lord.<sup>17</sup>

*Handbook of the Prophets, R.B. Chisholm*

However, Professor Robert B. Chisholm Jr., an Old Testament scholar of Dallas Theological Seminary, in his *Handbook of the Prophets*, offers a creative piece of scholarship surrounding the text. He sees Isaiah 61:1–11 as good news for the oppressed. He argues that several voices can be heard in the text. According to Chisholm, one anointed with the Lord’s Spirit announces his divine commission in verses 1–3, the Lord himself speaks assuring words in verses 7–9 and personifies Zion responds in verses 10–11. Chisholm believes at some point between verses 3 and 7, the anointed one stops speaking and gives way to the Lord, but it is not entirely clear where this change occurs.<sup>49</sup> Professor Chisholm argues that the Third-Person verb forms in verses 3b–5 appear to be

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<sup>15</sup> Gaebelein, *Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, Vol. 6, 333.

<sup>16</sup> Gaebelein, *Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, Vol. 6, 334.

<sup>17</sup> Gaebelein, *Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, Vol. 6, 334.

linked with verses 1-3a, so it may be that “and you” at the beginning of verse 6 marks the transition.<sup>18</sup>

Chisholm argues that the precise identity of the speaker in verses 1–3 has been debated. Still, a close examination of the evidence points to the servant of the Lord depicted in the earlier servant songs. Like the servant in the songs, the speaker is empowered by the divine Spirit to free those imprisoned (compared v. 1 with 42:1, 7; 49:9).<sup>19</sup> The language here recalled the Year of Jubilee (Leviticus 25:10). He announces that the prisoners will be freed (v. 1b), and the Lord will vindicate his suffering people, turning their sorrow into joy (vv. 2–3a).<sup>20</sup>

Chisholm contends that the mission of deliverance and justice is a distinctly royal task that links the speaker with the royal figure of the first two servant songs and the ideal just king portrayed in Isaiah 11. Chisholm further argues that Jesus emerges as the fulfillment of these prophecies. No wonder Jesus boldly identified himself with the speaker of Isaiah 61:1–2 and (Luke 4:18–21).

### **Historical Implications of the Text**

Once released from prison in exile and restored to their land, the people would rebuild the cities that had been in ruin (v. 4). History suggests that foreigners, who once

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<sup>18</sup> Robert B. Chisholm, Jr., *Handbook on the Prophets* (Hawthorne, CA: Baker Academics, 2017), 130.

<sup>19</sup> Chisholm, *Handbook of the Prophets*, 130.

<sup>20</sup> Chisholm, *Handbook of the Prophets*, 130.

took and robbed God's people of their harvest (Isaiah 62:8), will take care of their sheep, fields, and vineyards (v.5).<sup>21</sup>

The Handbook of the Prophets further states that:

In fulfillment of the ancient covenantal ideal (see Exodus 19:6), the restored community will serve as the Lord's priests and collect tribute from the nations (v.6). Divine blessing and joy will be replaced by disgrace and shame (v.7), for the Lord is committed to justice and is determined to vindicate his people (v.8a; see vv. 1–3). The Lord's devotion to them all will accumulate in a renewed covenant relationship that will be permanent (v. 8b; see 55:3; 59:21). The nations of the earth will take notice of this new covenant community and acknowledge that they are indeed an object of divine blessing (v.9).<sup>22</sup>

According to Chisholm, this portrait of the future prompts a response from the recipient of God's blessings; personified Zion rejoices and pictures herself clothed like a beautiful bride. She celebrates God's vindication of his people, and it will elicit great praise from the nations. It will be like a plant springing up from the soil.<sup>23</sup>

#### *Historical Exegetical Thoughts from Expository Bible Commentary*

Expository Bible Commentary scholars contend that the laws of inheritance, so closely linked to the Jubilee regulations, provided for a double inheritance for the first born (Deuteronomy 21:17). They concluded that previously perhaps because privileged brings greater responsibility, Israel had received double punishment (40:2); now, as God's (Exodus 4:22–23; cf. Psalm 89:27), she has a double portion in her land (v. 7), this

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<sup>21</sup> Chisholm, *Handbook of the Prophets*, 130.

<sup>22</sup> Chisholm, *Handbook of the Prophets*, 130–131.

<sup>23</sup> Chisholm, *Handbook of the Prophets*, 131.

refers to the value of the land.<sup>24</sup> The land would be restored to God's people because those who have taken it had no right to it, and the Lord is God's justice.<sup>25</sup>

Expository scholars point out that the everlasting covenant (v.8), preceded by a reference to the divine faithfulness, and probably undergirds existing covenants, so it is evidence of God's integrity. Further, their reference to the nations has implications related to the Abrahamic covenant (cf. Genesis 12:1–3) rather than the Davidic (cf. Isaiah 55:3) that is chiefly in view.<sup>26</sup> As mentioned in the *Handbook of the Prophets*, the Expository Bible Commentary affirms that the speaker in these verses is probably personified Zion, who expresses her unbound joy in God. The analogy of clothing (v.10), already employed in verse 3, appears again. What is essential here is that clothing often expresses either status or mood – or both.<sup>27</sup>

The final verse of the chapter (v. 11) reminds us of 55:10–11. If it is an intentional allusion, then it will support the theme of God's faithfulness (v. 8). God's word will secure the growth of righteousness and praise in his people, which will be publicly displayed, as at a bridal feast, before the nations as alluded to in the previous work.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Gaebelein, *Expository Bible Commentary*, Vol. 6, 334.

<sup>25</sup> Gaebelein, *Expository Bible Commentary* Vol. 6, 334.

<sup>26</sup> Gaebelein *Expository Bible Commentary*, Vol. 6, 334.

<sup>27</sup> Chisholm, *Handbook of the Prophets*, 131.

<sup>28</sup> Gaebelein, *Expository Bible Commentary* Vol. 6, 334

## Major Themes

Within the context of prophetic scriptures, there seems to be a sense of urgency and calling directly from God. It is noted in Luke 4:18, Jesus says, “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,” and further, “He has anointed me to bring good news” (Luke 4:18a NRSV). Both Jeremiah and Isaiah experienced a similar urgency of the call, similar to Jesus, but there is a touching of the lips or mouth. Then the Lord reached out his hand and touched my mouth and said to me, “I have put my words in your mouth” (Jeremiah 1:9). We see a similar experience with Isaiah below:

Then the one seraphs flew to me, holding a live coal in his hand, which he had taken from the altar with a pair of tongs. The seraph touched my mouth with it and said, “Now that this has touched your lips, your guilt departed, and your sin is blotted out” (Isaiah 6:6-7 NRSV).

### *The Theme of a Prophetic Call to Preach*

There is an urgency within a prophet called by God to preach His Word. Jeremiah wants to quit, but he cannot. He declares that the word is a fire in his bones (Jeremiah 20:9). An urgency for justice and righteousness to prevail is a theme throughout the OT scriptures, which is woven within the fabric of the prophetic text. In the book, *The Preacher and His Preaching*, Alfred P. Gibbs argues that preaching is the God-Ordained means of spreading the Gospel. Gibbs outline seven essential pieces related to the preacher and his preaching in Romans 10:9-17; and why it is an urgent mandate from the Lord.<sup>29</sup> Gibbs points to the following words within the Romans passage: 1. Confess, 2. saved, 3. call, 4. believe, 5. heard, 6. preacher, and 7 sent.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Alfred P. Gibbs, *The Preacher and His Preaching* (Dubuque, IA: ECS Ministries, 2002), 85-91.

<sup>30</sup> Gibbs, *The Preacher and His Preaching*, 85-91.

14 But how are they to call on one in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in one whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone to proclaim him? 15 And how are they to proclaim him unless they are sent? As it is written, How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news (Romans 10: 14 – 15 NRSV).

This urgency is so profound in the New Testament that most Apostles died violently because of their commitment to preaching the gospel. In Titus, there is an emphasis on teaching, preaching, and teaching sound doctrine (Titus 2:1). Paul tells Timothy, “Preach the word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage – with great patience and careful instruction (2 Timothy 4:2).” He also emphasized to Timothy that it was important to teach and preach sound doctrine (2 Timothy 4:3). Paul emphasizes in a letter to the Corinthian church Christ crucified is God’s power and wisdom. He writes, “... but we preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, but to those whom God has called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God” (1 Corinthians 1:23–24).

Both Isaiah 61:1–2 and Luke 4:18 are connected in terms of prophecy, and these biblical texts embrace a theme of empowerment through justice for those who are marginalized. This justice is revealed through the anointed preaching of the good news to the poor, a proclamation of freedom to prisoners, recovering sight to the blind, and setting the oppressed free. It is through the dynamic instrument of prophetic preaching that this occurs. Therefore, it must be understood by the practitioner-scholar preacher and to the church that the nature of prophetic ministry is mandated in both the Old and New Testaments.

*Themes Related to the Poor and Oppressed*

When Jesus says to let the oppressed go free, this is not just a quote but appears to be a statement of affirmation. The Exposition Bible Scholars further argue that the quotation has significance both as our Lord's statement of his call to his saving ministry and as Luke's affirmation of the ministry as this ministry as thematic in his Gospel. In saying, "Today, this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing" (v.21), Jesus identifies himself as the subject of Isaiah's prophetic word. As such, they argue the following:

He is the bearer of the spirit (v.18), the eschatological prophet proclaiming of the good news, and the one who brings release to the oppressed (a messianic function). His role as the suffering servant is not specified here, but an association may be assumed on the basis of the place of Isaiah 61 among servant passages.<sup>31</sup>

Exposition Bible Scholars further state that we see here that Jesus's ministry will be uniquely marked by the presence of the Spirit as prophetically foretold. His role as an eschatological prophetic is intertwined with that of John the Baptist as a prophetic forerunner. It is important to note that Jesus, not John the Baptist, was the prophet predicted in Deuteronomy 18:18 (cf. John 1:19–24, especially v.21).<sup>32</sup>

Further, Exposition Bible Commentary scholars contend that (in Luke 4:18) is the prophetic mission is described by Isaiah as a mission of proclamation, and this mission is accepted by Jesus of Nazareth – despite the obvious opposition.<sup>33</sup> What scholars have pointed out is that the prophetic role of Jesus overlaps with his role as Messiah, His

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<sup>31</sup> Frank E. Gaebelein, *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, Vol. 8 (Grand Rapids, MI: Regency Reference Library, Zondervan Publishing, 1984), 866.

<sup>32</sup> Frank E. Gaebelein, *The Expositors Bible Commentary*, Vol. 8 (Grand Rapids, MI: Regency Reference Library, Zondervan Publishing), 1984), 867.

<sup>33</sup> Gaebelein, *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, Vol. 8, 867.

ministry of deliverance is a part of his messianic character. This is assumption probably lay behind the doubts of John the Baptist when his release from prison was not forthcoming Luke 7:18-19).<sup>34</sup>

The disciples of John reported all these things to him. So John summoned two of his disciples and sent them to the Lord to ask, “Are you the One who is to come, or are we to wait for another?” Luke 7:18-19? <sup>35</sup>

The Apostle John answers this question of the messianic character of Jesus this way:

In the beginning, was the Word, and the Word as with God, and the Word was God. He was at the beginning with God. All things came into being through him, and without him, not one thing came into being in him was life, and the life was the light of the people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it. The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world. He was in the world, and the world came into being through him, yet the world did not know him.”(John 1:1-5; 9-10)<sup>36</sup>

John clearly sees Jesus as more than just an ordinary man or even an ordinary prophet, but he seems to Jesus as a deity, and he further confirms this in John 1:14 which he states:

And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of the of a father’s only son, full of grace and truth. (John 1:14 NRSV)<sup>37</sup>

As scholars explore each of the gospel writer’s perspectives on Jesus, it is certain that Jesus is not like other prophets that came before him in the Old Testament.

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<sup>34</sup> Gaebelein, *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, vol. 8, 867.

<sup>35</sup> Luke 7:18–19 (New Revised Standard Version).

<sup>36</sup> John 1:1-5: 9-10 (New Revised Standard Version).

<sup>37</sup> John 1:14 (New Revised Standard Version).



## Word Study

In reviewing the text more closely, there are some significant words that appear in various translations of the Luke 4:18 passage. There are five words highlighted in this word study. These are the following: spirit, anointed, poor, and captives (or prisoners). These specific words were selected because of their meaning to the text in both Luke 4:18 and Isaiah 61:2 and their relevance in the restoration of prophetic ministry in the church.

A phrase or word found in just about every English translation of the biblical text of Luke 4:18 is the “Spirit of the Lord.” Spirit has several meanings in both the Old and the New Testament scriptures. Some scholars argue that there are at least eight meanings for spirit in the Old Testament, whereas there appear to be only four designations for the spirit in the New Testament. According to the Baker Theological Dictionary of the Bible (BTD), the OT defines spirit in the following manner:

The Hebrew word for “spirit” is *ruah*. It appears 389 times in the Old Testament. Its varied use almost defies analysis, but some emphases are discernible. It is used more often of God (136 times) than of persons or animals (129 times). Its basic meaning is wind (113 times). The tress of the forest sway before the wind (Isaiah 7:2); the Lord walked in the garden at the breezy time of day (Genesis 3:8)<sup>38</sup>

In addition, BDT also contends, “Breath is also a basic meaning of this term. It is the Lord who gives breath [(Ezek. 37:9 - 10)].”<sup>39</sup> This is found in several passages. Further, in some OT passages of scripture, there is a wordplay on *ruah*. Some texts allow it to mean wind, breath, spirit. For example, a similar phenomenon is found in John 3:5,8,

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<sup>38</sup> Walter A. Elwell, ed., *Baker Theological Dictionary of the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1996), 744.

<sup>39</sup> Walter A. Elwell, ed., *Baker Theological Dictionary of the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1996), 744.

where *pneuma* means wind and spirit. However, when applied to a person *ruah* can mean vital power and strength.<sup>40</sup> In addition, *ruah* can refer to feelings of a person or will of a person. Thus, given the broader applications of the term, BDT argues that:

Given the distributed uses of *ruah*, (standing twice as often for the wind/power of God as it does for the breath/feelings/will of the person), mortals cannot see themselves as independent of God. The *ruah* is living not simply through a surge of vitality, but because of God's initiatives and actions. The link between the anthropological and the divine *ruah*, is not always clear and well defined.<sup>41</sup>

However, within the New Testament, the word is used for spirit is *Pneuma* is the NT counterpart to the OT *ruah*. Scholars suggest that occasionally it means wind (John 3:8) and breath (Matthew 27:50; Thess. 2:8), it is most generally translated as “spirit” – an incorporeal, feeling, and intelligent being.<sup>42</sup> Occasionally, there are some passages of scripture where *pneuma* is treated as a parallel structure to with *psyche*. The terms seem to be one and the same in (Luke 1:46–47) and seem to be interchangeable. On the other hand, that are passages that distinguish between the two. Paul speaks of Adam as a “living soul” but Christ as a “life-giving spirit.” Scholars suggest that the one is oriented towards human life and the other towards heavenly life.<sup>43</sup>

Ultimately, the best application is of Luke 4:18 is the word “spirit,” which refers to the Spirit of God, the Holy Spirit. In the context of the OT, the spirit occasionally came upon people to give them the power to do God's will or enable them to serve God in a

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<sup>40</sup> Walter A. Elwell, ed. *Baker Theological Dictionary of the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1996), 744.

<sup>41</sup> W. A. Elwell, ed., *Baker Theological Dictionary of the Bible*, 744-745.

<sup>42</sup> W. A. Elwell, ed., *Baker Theological Dictionary of the Bible*, 745.

<sup>43</sup> W. A. Elwell, ed., *Baker Theological Dictionary of the Bible*, 745.

special way.<sup>44</sup> According to Nelson's New Illustrated Bible Dictionary in the New Testament:

The Holy Spirit was an even more active presence among the people of God. The Holy Spirit was the agent of the fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecies (Acts 1:16, 2:16–21; 3:18; 28:25–27.) He continued to inspire Christian prophets and workers in order to work His will on earth (Acts 2:4; 19:6).<sup>45</sup>

Another word that appears to be in every translation of Luke 4:18 is the word “Anointed,” which is found in every translation of Luke 4:18b, and in some cases, it is phrased “because He has anointed me to bring.” According to the Baker Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology, the word “anoint” means:

To smear or rub with oil or perfume for either private or religious purposes. The Hebrew term for “anoint,” *masah*, has secular connotations, such as rubbing a shield with oil (Isaiah 21:5), smearing paint on a house (Jeremiah 22:14), anointing the body with oil (Amos 6:6).<sup>46</sup>

The theological meaning of “anoint” is four-fold. First, it is an individual or an object set apart for divine use that is said to be “anointed.” For example, Solomon was anointed ruler over Israel (1 Chronicles 29:22); this anointing made him both responsible for and accountable to the people.<sup>47</sup> Second, when people were anointed, God empowered them to accomplish his task (1 Samuel 10:6; 16:13); and third, no one was allowed to harm God's anointed (1 Samuel 24:10; 26:9). Finally, the term *masiah* derived from *masah*, refers to Israel's Messiah was to come from the house of David (Psalms.

<sup>44</sup> Walter A. Elwell, ed., *Baker Theological Dictionary of the Bible*, 745.

<sup>45</sup> Ralph F. Youngblood, General ed., *Nelson's New Illustrated Bible Dictionary* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1995), 1198.

<sup>46</sup> Walter A. Elwell, ed., *Baker Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, 26.

<sup>47</sup> Baker Elwell, *Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1996), 26.

84:9; 89:38, 51)<sup>48</sup> In New Testament literature, Christ is portrayed as the Messiah, and Jesus is described as the promised deliverer (John 1:41; 4:25), anointed with the Holy Spirit and with power (Acts 10:38).<sup>49</sup>

The next part of the phrase is “*to bring good news to the poor,*” or as some translations indicate, to “*proclaim good news to the poor*” or “preach the gospel to the poor” (Luke 4:18b). This is important because of its implications in both the OT and NT culture and the culture and theology in modern times.

According to Vine’s Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words, there are at least six words that address the biblical and theological meaning of what it means to be poor. However, three of these words relate more to the text in Luke. The first word is *PTOCHOS*. It addresses the broad sense of being poor but often refers to the widows of the time era in both the OT and NT cultures.<sup>50</sup> Vine notes that the *poor* are constantly the subject of injustice and need others to assist them (Matthew 19:21, Mark 10:21, Luke 14:13), and the idea of Jesus coming to empower the *poor* is significant. The second word for *poor* is *PENICHROS*, akin to being needy or poor and is used in Luke 21:2 and frequently seen in the ancient papyri.<sup>51</sup> The third word used in the NT is *PTOCHEUO*, which means to be as a beggar, and it is like being destitute but can symbolically mean the same thing (2 Corinthians 8:9).<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> Baker Elwell, *Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology* (Baker Books, 1996), 26.

<sup>49</sup> Baker Elwell, *Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology* (Baker Books, 1996), 26.

<sup>50</sup> W. E. Vine. *Vine’s Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers), 864.

<sup>51</sup> Vine, *Vine’s Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words*, 864.

<sup>52</sup> Vine, *Vine’s Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words*, 864.

Finally, the fourth word mentioned in the biblical text is quite relevant to prophetic ministry today, and that is the word “captives,” or some translations indicate “prisoners.” There are at least five words that are translated in the NT specifically related to Luke 4:18, but this document will only address two of them. The first word is the word *AICHMALOTOS*. This means one who is taken by the spear or one who has been captured by force and refers to one that is captive.<sup>53</sup> The related word is in (Revelation 13:10 and Ephesians 4:8) *AICHMALOSIA*, which means “captivity” it’s an abstract noun and contrasts with the previous term, hence “He led captivity captive,” an illusion to the OT.<sup>54</sup>

However, the *Vine’s Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words* expands on this concept related to *AICHMALOSIA* by stating:

He led captivity captive (margin, a multitude of captives) captive seems to be an illusion of the triumphal process by which a victory was celebrated, captives were taken, forming part of the procession. See Judges 5:12. The quotation is from Psalms 68:18 and probably is a forceful expression for Christ’s victory through His Death over the hostile powers of darkness. An alternative suggestion is that at His Ascension Christ transferred the redeemed Old Testament saints from Sheol to His own presence in glory.<sup>55</sup>

The good news that Jesus was to proclaim was used frequently throughout the book of Luke and was initially shared in (Luke 1:19). The terms used in the text are significant to the culture of the time. The “poor,” like the “prisoners,” the “blind,” and the “oppressed,” are not the unfortunate of this world but those who have a special need for

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<sup>53</sup> Vine, *Vine’s Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words*, 159

<sup>54</sup> Vine, *Vine’s Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words*, 159.

<sup>55</sup> Vine, *Vine’s Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words*, 159.

dependence on God. The words to release the “oppressed” filled out the meaning of the previous words.<sup>38</sup> In fact, Luke 7:22 cites some ways Jesus fulfilled this mission. This was the theme of Jesus’ ministry. He was to preach the Good News and the favor of God, which would be realized through his death and resurrection.<sup>56</sup> Finally, the prophecy referring to the “year of the Lord’s favor” (v.19) is reminiscent of the Jubilee (one year in every fifty) when debts were forgiven and slaves set free (Leviticus 25:8-17). It is a time in history when God, in His sovereign grace, brings freedom from guilt and the effects of sin.

### **Conclusion**

In summary, Luke presents the quotation and Jesus’ ensuing comments as a programmatic statement of Jesus’ ministry. As a prophet and Messiah, he will minister to the social outcasts and needy, including Gentiles. Hence, Jesus is a prophetic preacher.<sup>57</sup> This is a reminder of the need to restore prophetic ministry in the church and that congregations must realize the biblical foundation of this ministry in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and the spiritual implications of not fulfilling this mandate.

It is only through preaching and teaching, and specifically, a renewal of prophetic preaching in the church can prophetic ministry be restored in congregations and the community. Prophetic preaching shifts the focus of a congregation from what is happening to them as a local church to what is happening to them as a part of society. Prophetic preaching then asked the question, “What is the role or the appropriate

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<sup>56</sup> Gaebelein, *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, Vol. 8, 867.

<sup>57</sup> Walter A. Elwell & Robert W. Yarbrough, *Encountering the New Testament*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic), 102.

response of our congregation, our associations, and our denomination to the events that are occurring within our society and throughout the world?” Prophetic preaching points out those false gods of comfort.<sup>58</sup>

Further, it points out a lack of concern and acquiescence in the face of evil that can so easily replace the true God of the scriptures who calls believers to the active pursuit of justice and righteousness for every member of society.<sup>59</sup> In short, this justice is revealed through the anointed preaching of the good news to the poor, a proclamation of freedom to prisoners, and recovery of sight to the blind, and setting the oppressed free. The church must reexamine the biblical foundation of prophetic ministry. After all, the prophets preached truth to power, attacking the monarchs and the ruling elite for putting more confidence in armies and alliances than they did in the God who had brought them into the land.<sup>60</sup>

According to Francis Chan, prophetic preaching begins with something we’ve largely lost in the American church culture – a high view of God’s Word. Very few of us tremble when we hear or read God’s Word.<sup>61</sup> Chan believes that prophetic preaching begins and ends with love but a deep love for the Lord that transcends vulnerable humanity.<sup>62</sup> Jesus points out what that love should look like in the following passage: I

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<sup>58</sup> Marvin A. McMickle, *Where have all the Prophets Gone? Reclaiming Prophetic Preaching in America* (Cleveland, OH: The Pilgrim Press), 2–3.

<sup>59</sup> McMickle, *Where have all the Prophets Gone? Reclaiming Prophetic Preaching in America*, 2–3.

<sup>60</sup> McMickle, *Where have all the Prophets Gone? Reclaiming Prophetic Preaching in America*, 3.

<sup>61</sup> Craig Brain Larson, General Editor. *Prophetic Preaching* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, LLC, 2012), 12.

<sup>62</sup> Larson, *Prophetic Preaching*, 16.

was hungry, and you gave me food, I was thirsty, and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger, and you welcomed me, I was naked, and you gave me clothing, I was sick, and you took care of me, I was in prison, and you visited me (Matthew 25:35–36, NRSV).<sup>63</sup>

Finally, Leonora Tubbs Tisdale argues the need for the restoration of prophetic ministry this way:

Prophetic proclamation requires the heart of the preacher, that breaks with the things that break God's heart; a passion for justice in the world; the imagination, conviction, and courage to speak words from God; humility, and honesty in the preaching moment; and a strong reliance on the presence and power of the Holy Spirit.<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> Matthew 25:35-36 (New Revised Standard Version).

<sup>64</sup> Larson, *Prophetic Preaching*, 10.



## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **HISTORICAL FOUNDATION**

#### **Introduction**

The historical foundation of preaching is essential to understand because it serves as a guide that can inform prophetic ministry and praxis in the twenty-first century within the context of Southside Church. This chapter focuses on life and theology and, specifically, the theology of preaching of Saint Augustine. He provides a significant historical foundation for theological thought related to the project focus of restoring the prophetic ministry elements in the black Church through a model of preaching, teaching, and collaborative discipleship. The goal of this section is to inform prophetic ministry through the lens of a historical figure in the church. In this case, we will examine the life and ministry of as well as the theology of that great African theologian Saint Augustine.

#### **Introduction to Saint Augustine**

The Gospels contain portions of the oral tradition of preaching, The Book of Acts is heavily sprinkled with sermons and sermon fragments, and the Epistles to the Hebrews is really a sermon in a form that flourishes even to this day. Most of these sermons come from the Apostle Paul. Another great giant of preaching is Augustine. He joined Christian preaching and embraced Greek rhetoric. He wrote the first-ever textbook on

science and the art of preaching.<sup>1</sup> Augustine addressed the discussion of preaching as an appeal to the mind, heart, and will (*On Christian Doctrine*).<sup>2</sup> This chapter introduces and examines Saint Augustine as a reformer, theologian, and preacher. In this section, he discusses his life, theology, philosophy, and theology of preaching.

A short overview of Augustine's thoughts cannot offer an appropriate tribute to his life and work when considering his significant contributions to the Catholic Church. This is because he is responsible for writing the most famous and influential of all ancient autobiographies. The psychology and personality of Augustine have been attention throughout the centuries.<sup>3</sup> Aurelius Augustinus was born in AD 354 and died in 430. He lived most of his life in the Roman-occupied area of Northern Africa. During the last thirty-four years of his life, he lived in minsters at the seaport region of Hippo, now modern-day Annaba in Algeria. While in Hippo, Bishop Augustine had only his books, writing, and family.<sup>4</sup> Scholars suggest that Augustine had no authentic culture except what he found through books and his studies.

His writings made him the most influential author of the medieval period, specifically in areas such as philosophy, rhetoric, and theology. His influence has carried over even to both Martin Luther and John Calvin. Some scholars believe that Luther's thinking was deeply influenced by the writings of Augustine.

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<sup>1</sup> Craddock, *Preaching*, 36–37.

<sup>2</sup> Craddock, *Preaching*, 37.

<sup>3</sup> Henry Chadwick, *Augustine*, (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1986), 1.

<sup>4</sup> Chadwick, *Augustine*, 1.

### North African Culture and Augustine

According to Peter Sanlon's book, *Augustine's Theology of Preaching*, doctrine cannot be formulated apart from historical context, so historical context cannot be recounted without interpretation. Sanlon suggests that there was great tension between order and passion when it came to Augustine, and it was out of this paradox from which Augustine preached.<sup>5</sup> Historical theology records his scholarly contributions well.

Sanlon shares that invasion and subjugation were repeated features of classical North African history. His research uncovers the following about North African History and culture during the time of Augustine:

The Phoenicians ruled by means of their naval might until about the second century B.C.E. The Romans inaugurated the imperial age which endured until the Vandals captured Carthage in C.E. 439. At the end of C.E. 533, Emperor Justinian's forces conquered Carthage. As civil war and instability weakened the Byzantine rule of North Africa, Islamic forces spread with remarkable speed from Mecca. Egypt was conquered by Muslims in C.E. 641, Cyrenaica in C.E. 642, and Tripoli and Eastern Fezzan in C.E. 643. Byzantine resistance paused the Islamic conquests. The city of Kairouan was founded as a permanent outpost of Islam in C.E. 669; by C.E. 700, North Africa was fully subdued by the Muslims.[]<sup>6</sup>

North Africa was an immensely prosperous region and, therefore, attractive to invaders. However, the wealth of Africa was not the direct result of its possessing plentiful resources. Many of the resources were inextricably intertwined with the

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<sup>5</sup> Peter Sanlon, *Augustine's Theology of Preaching* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2014), 2.

<sup>6</sup> Sanlon, *Augustine's Theology of Preaching*, 2.

infrastructure imposed by conquering nations. Sanlon argues the prosperity of North Africa was the result of its flourishing under the order imposed from without.<sup>7</sup>

The period of history within which Augustine flourished is the late Roman rule in North Africa. He lived in an age that inherited the legacy of the Roman order and infrastructure. The Roman Empire's development efforts increased the opportunity for Christianity to grow and thrive. By the mid-third century, Roman soldiers had laid twelve thousand miles of roads.<sup>8</sup>

Sanlon contends that a vast network with miles demarcated by the famous Roman milestones facilitated military movement, tax collection, and domestic travel. Once soldiers conquered a region, they worked as unpaid engineers to survey land and build the desired infrastructure.<sup>9</sup> Today, their fifty-mile aqueduct still stands over the River Miliana. Usable maps were drawn up, showing the connections between towns.<sup>10</sup> Sanlon believes that so effective was the marriage between Roman rule and African resources that by the middle of the second century, North West Africa produced two-thirds of the wheat needed by Rome.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Sanlon, *Augustine's Theology of Preaching*, 2.

<sup>8</sup> Sanlon, *Augustine's Theology of Preaching*, 2.

<sup>9</sup> Sanlon, *Augustine's Theology of Preaching*, 2.

<sup>10</sup> Sanlon, *Augustine's Theology of Preaching*, 2–3.

<sup>11</sup> Sanlon, *Augustine's Theology of Preaching*, 3.

### The Church in North Africa

Scholar Peter Sanlon contends that North Africans embraced city life, and by the third century, there were close to six hundred cities, and two-thirds of these were surrounded by fertile farmland. These cities were no more than eight miles apart.<sup>12</sup> Sanlon suggests that most of these cities had populations between five and fifteen thousand. Carthage was the only city with a six-figure population, and this included some very impressive Christian buildings. Excavations have revealed that Hippo has a forum, baths, theatre, residential quarter, and ecclesiastical area.<sup>13</sup> Thus, within this context that Bishop Augustine preached and wrote his *Confessions*, *The City of God*, and many others.

Henry Chadwick, in his book entitled *Augustine*, discusses how the African churches were divided after the Great Persecution under Diocletian (303). They could not agree on the point at which one could or could not compromise with the secular power.<sup>14</sup> Further, according to much of the literature, African churches held very strong apocalyptic beliefs. In many churches, [was] read the Revelation of St. John to mean that Christ would return to earth and reign with the saints for a thousand years, a doctrine shared by Augustine, himself at first – until he came to interpret the millennium allegorically of heaven.<sup>15</sup>

During this time, apocalyptic beliefs commonly went hand in hand with a highly negative view of the imperial government as an agent of virtue. As a result, it became

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<sup>12</sup> Sanlon, *Augustine's Theology of Preaching*, 3.

<sup>14</sup> Henry Chadwick, *Augustine* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1986), 75.

<sup>15</sup> Chadwick, *Augustine*, 75.

easy to spread pessimistic opinions easily among the agrarian small-holders and tenant farmers of Numidia.<sup>16</sup> Things became more intense when the edicts of the pagan emperor forbade Christians to meet for worship and required the surrender of sacred books and vessels. This led many Christians to study the heroic story of the Maccabees and their fierce resistance to Antiochus Epiphanes more than four centuries earlier.<sup>17</sup>

Sanlon argues that the fortitude of the African church under persecution and the Church's honoring martyrs speaks much of their passion for faithfulness. Africa had a long tradition of embracing martyrdom as an expression of faithfulness to God. When Augustine [came]...into the North African Church, he [entered] the Church remained proud of its famous martyrs, which made the African authentic and foundational.<sup>18</sup>

Martyrdom, in many ways, highlights the strength of prophetic preaching and the love the ancients had for the Word of God. In fact, of believers that were martyred, none of these ranked higher than Cyprian (martyred in C.E. 258) and Perpetua (martyred in 203). The former represented ecclesiastical leadership and scholarly theology, sealed in blood. The latter was a reminder that women, children, and anonymous African Christians made up the majority of martyrs.<sup>19</sup> The most significant problem by C.E. 300

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<sup>16</sup> Chawick, *Augustine*, 75.

<sup>17</sup> Chawick, *Augustine*, 75.

<sup>18</sup> Sanlon, *Augustine's Theology of Preaching*, 4.

<sup>19</sup> Sanlon, *Augustine's Theology of Preaching*, 4.

was the burden of taxation upon North Africans. It was so punitive that it caused social unrest.<sup>20</sup>

Against the backdrop of such discontent and persecution, Donatism divided the Church into those who accepted repentant leaders who had denied the faith under persecution and those who would not. The Donatists were in the majority and often had the support of the poorer people.<sup>21</sup>

Chadwick argues that there was a sharp division of ethical judgement between the hawks and the doves. Christian Hawks refused to cooperate with the secular authorities. Whereas the doves wanted no confrontations but only to live quiet lives of modest virtue.<sup>22</sup>

Chadwick sees the divide in specific terms:

Among the doves were the bishop of Carthage and his archdeacon, who regarded the zealots as provocative and underserving of the title of a martyr or 'confessor' (the early Christian term for one who confessed the faith before the governor and suffered torture and imprisonment, but was not granted the supreme gift of martyrdom). there was deep disagreement among the Christians of Africa about whether it was right for acts of vandalism to be committed against pagan shrines as citadels of demonic corruption, or whether such acts merely generated hatred of the Church among pagan worshippers, and failed to respect the sincerity of the pagan intention.<sup>23</sup>

In 311, the bishop of Carthage died, and the doves' party had to act quickly. They gathered three bishops to lay hands on the archdeacon as his successor. Much of the literature suggests that the principal consecrator was one of those bishops who, eight

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<sup>20</sup> Sanlon, *Augustine's Theology of Preaching*, 4

<sup>21</sup> Sanlon, *Augustine's Theology of Preaching*, 5.

<sup>22</sup> Chadwick, *Augustine*, 75.

<sup>23</sup> Chadwick, *Augustine*, 76.

years earlier, surrendered sacred books and vessels to authorities. However, amid the division, the Hawks brought in the old primate of Numidia with a very large body of supporting bishops, and as a result, a rival bishop was consecrated.<sup>24</sup>

The Numidian faction came to be led by Donatus, their bishop in Carthage. The Donatists rejected the Catholic community, which in Numidia was a minority group both in town and countryside and despite it as the puppet of secular government. Many saw it as an instrument of political ends, polluted by a consistent record of compromise with worldliness.<sup>25</sup> According to Chadwick, Donatists refused to acknowledge the validity and purity of Catholic sacraments of any kind, so in their eyes, Augustine was a schismatic and heretical layman. Group distrust and rancor became inveterate.<sup>26</sup>

Further, both sides discouraged mixed marriages and made canonical enactments against them. It was very common for families to be divided. Augustine himself had a Donatist cousin. To illustrate the problem, Chadwick states, “the Donatists held with deep passion that they alone were [safeguarding] the authentic holiness and ritual purity of God’s temple, the Church.”<sup>27</sup> Disunity was a prevalent and serious feature of the Donatist controversy, which provided a crucial context for Augustine’s ministry. The

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<sup>24</sup> Chadwick, *Augustine*, 76.

<sup>25</sup> Chadwick, *Augustine*, 76.

<sup>26</sup> Chadwick, *Augustine*, 76.

<sup>27</sup> Sanlon, *Augustine’s Theology of Preaching*, 6.



disunity meant that authority had to be sought other than mere popularity.<sup>28</sup> Augustine's ultimate challenge was the restoration of unity within the church.

### **Augustine's Preaching in North Africa**

Augustine sought to impose order on a disunited Church. This order was intended to be theological, universal, [and] ecclesial, and charitable.<sup>29</sup> When Augustine became a bishop, he found the two communities numbly resigned to eighty-five years of mutual hostility and absolute distrust. The rancor was well sustained on the Donatist side by acts of fearful violence against Catholic buildings and clergy.<sup>30</sup> The zealots who had once assaulted pagan shrines now found themselves a new target in Catholic basilicas, where they would once [smash] the wooden altar over the head of the poor Catholic bishop if he were so unwise as to be available.<sup>31</sup>

The list of Catholic clergy who suffered maiming or blinding when lime and vinegar were thrown into their eyes, or outright death, was not short. Augustine himself once escaped a Donatist ambush intended to silence him forever, only because his guide took the road wrong. Many of the Donatist bishops publicly deplored the violence, which was mainly organized by rural clergy.<sup>32</sup>

It has been suggested that the context of Donatism informed much of Augustine's preaching. His authority as a bishop was exercised from a "clerical" monastery. Donatism

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<sup>28</sup> Sanlon, *Augustine's Theology of Preaching*, 6.

<sup>30</sup> Sanlon, *Augustine's Theology of Preaching*, 6.

<sup>31</sup> Sanlon, *Augustine's Theology of Preaching*, 6–7.

<sup>32</sup> Sanlon, *Augustine's Theology of Preaching*, 7.

encouraged Augustine to emphasize the worldwide catholicity of the Christian Church, the love and acceptance Christians should offer repentant brethren, the validity of correctly administered sacraments, and the impossibility of removing sin from the Church in this age.<sup>33</sup> These are the kind of distinctive Augustinian theological themes that show how deeply Donatism shaped his brand of teaching prophetic preaching.

Augustine argued from biblical prophecies about the extension of God's rule over all the earth, not just in East Africa. To understand the preaching of Augustine, you have to observe the influence of Ambrose (C.E. 337–397). Though he preached in Milan, his singular impact on Augustine is significant enough for reflection. This influence reminds scholars that Augustine was an educated Latin North African; and that his context was the imperial world, not just his homeland.<sup>34</sup> The distinctive feature of Ambrose's preaching was its saturation in Scripture. At first, Augustine was unimpressed with Scripture. However, he was so intrigued by his life and preaching Augustine's view of Scripture changed because of the influence of Ambrose.<sup>35</sup> Ambrose bequeathed Augustine with a relentless focus upon Scripture and enthusiasm to open its inner meaning to listeners who were deaf to its message. In contrast, he would later develop his own style.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Sanlon, *Augustine's Theology of Preaching*, 8.

<sup>34</sup> Sanlon, *Augustine's Theology of Preaching*, 9.

<sup>35</sup> Sanlon, *Augustine's Theology of Preaching*, 12.

<sup>36</sup> Sanlon, *Augustine's Theology of Preaching*, 12.

### Augustine's Method of Preaching

Sanlon argues that Augustine interacted with the text and the listener so that he felt free to cease preaching when he knew the congregation had either tried or else accepted the message. Some scholars suggest that Augustine tried various approaches to communicate the insight he felt was in his message from God. There was in Augustine's flexibility in presentation.<sup>37</sup> Augustine preferred to imbibe the Scriptural text and preach it as the occasion demanded. The sermons of preachers before and after Augustine support what appears to be a hagiographical assessment. Chrysologus's preaching marked a decline from Augustine's warm, extemporary engagement with the text and the listeners.<sup>38</sup>

By Augustine's time, only bishops were permitted to preach. According to Sanlon, the situation was even worse than ecclesiastical order inhibiting the ministry of preaching. Many Bishops were too busy to preach or frightened of the Donatists.<sup>39</sup> An interesting historical fact is that Bishop Valerius was himself a product of this situation, a Greek speaker unable to preach in the Latin tongue of his congregation. Scholars argue that it is difficult to know whether Augustine's ordination as a priest or assistant to Valerius was the result of the bishop's talent for spotting or his congregations' frustration.<sup>40</sup> Whichever the case, Bishop Aurelius of Carthage appreciated the potential Augustine possessed. Therefore, Aurelius broke with ecclesiastical tradition and ordered

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<sup>37</sup> Sanlon, *Augustine's Theology of Preaching*, 13.

<sup>38</sup> Sanlon, *Augustine's Theology of Preaching*, 9.

<sup>39</sup> Sanlon, *Augustine's Theology of Preaching*, 13.

<sup>40</sup> Sanlon, *Augustine's Theology of Preaching*, 13.

the young priest to preach. After being ordained a bishop, Augustine was frenetically active but never too busy to preach.<sup>41</sup>

The historical development of preaching was intertwined with architecture. During persecutions, such as that under Decius, Christians met secretly in small groups. Preaching could not take the form of public discourse in such a restricted setting. Eventually, after Constantine gave his backing to the Christian church, funds and freedom permitted the architecture within which preaching as public discourse could flourish.[58]<sup>42</sup> Peter Sanlon had some remarkable observations of Augustine. He states, “When Augustine preached, he interacted with listeners in the assured manner of a trained orator. The unedited records of these interjections give his *Sermones* a sense of warm immediacy.”<sup>43</sup>

The intimacy is even more remarkable when it is remembered that Augustine spoke from the cathedra – an imposing seat modeled on Roman marble *cathedra* for passing judicial. The irony of a Christian preacher speaking from the same kind of seat as that from which Pilate condemned Christ would not have been lost on listeners.[59]<sup>44</sup>

While Augustine sat in the raised position of authority, his congregation stood around him.<sup>60</sup> It is possible that the building Augustine preached in had Donatist origins – they, after all, were the major church.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Sanlon, *Augustine's Theology of Preaching*, 13.

<sup>42</sup> Sanlon, *Augustine's Theology of Preaching*, 14.

<sup>43</sup> Sanlon, *Augustine's Theology of Preaching*, 14.

<sup>44</sup> Sanlon, *Augustine's Theology of Preaching*, 14.

<sup>45</sup> Sanlon, *Augustine's Theology of Preaching*, 15.

People crowded around the buildings for the EasterVigil and baptismal processions from the baptistery into the church. According to Sanlon, the stenographical recording of the *Sermones* is evidence that Augustine's preaching garnered wide interest. There was a demand for copies of *Sermones*, in all likelihood, a certain amount of excitable retelling of the preached content.<sup>46</sup>

It has been assumed that Augustine's listeners were drawn from all sections of society: rich, poor, educated, and barbarian. This is certainly the impression one gets from reading the *Sermones*, as they refer to slaves and the poor being present. Readers naturally assume that Paul's assessment of Corinth held for Hippo.<sup>47</sup> Such diversity within a congregation at that time would have been unique and profound. However, some scholars such as Ramsay MacMullen argued that the belief of a mixed congregation comprising diverse social strata was little more than romanticism. The limited size of the church buildings suggested to him that only the wealthy could attend. Thus, MacMullen does not see mixed congregations as realistic for Augustine's context.<sup>48</sup>

MacMullen's thesis is a helpful corrective to an idealization of Augustine's audience. However, his view ought not to be taken too far.<sup>49</sup> Other scholars disagree with Maxwell. In fact, Jaclyn Maxwell has a different perspective. Maxwell argues that "while artisans may not be actual beggars, they would have felt themselves to be poor in

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<sup>46</sup> Sanlon, *Augustine's Theology of Preaching*, 15.

<sup>47</sup> Sanlon, *Augustine's Theology of Preaching*, 15.

<sup>48</sup> Sanlon, *Augustine's Theology of Preaching*, 15.

<sup>49</sup> Sanlon, *Augustine's Theology of Preaching*, 16.

comparison to others, and absolute terms, compared to equivalent workers today, they indeed poor.”<sup>50</sup> Similarly, we can discern definite social distinctions among Augustine’s congregation: children, slaves, church leaders, farmers, and the poor.<sup>51</sup> Maxwell summarizes her argument this way:

MacMullen assumes that a small building would lead to attendance being restricted to the rich people who would not associate with the poor. But it could just as easily be the case that rich people would be attracted to a meeting where they can show off in front of the poor. That would fit with the sort of rebukes that Augustine gave the wealthy in his preaching. In addition, it should be remembered that Augustine was involved in regular legal cases and public matters to do with property ownership, wages, and slave manumission.<sup>74</sup> This aspect of his ministry would have brought him into frequent contact with the poor, some of whom may have subsequently attended his preaching. In summary, MacMullen offers a helpful corrective to imagining Augustine’s congregation as thousands of people united in a utopia that transcended all social barriers. The reality is more modest; however, it was still a genuine inclusion of several diverse representatives of society.<sup>52</sup>

None of this even touches upon the liturgical service and the demands that were placed on him in terms of preaching so frequently. The typical days for preaching were Sunday and Saturday; however, Augustine could be at more than one service on any given day. In addition to the regular Sunday pattern, several points in the liturgical calendar increased preaching responsibilities.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> Sanlon, *Augustine’s Theology of Preaching*, 16.

<sup>51</sup> Sanlon, *Augustine’s Theology of Preaching*, 17.

<sup>52</sup> Sanlon, *Augustine’s Theology of Preaching*, 18.

<sup>53</sup> Sanlon, *Augustine’s Theology of Preaching*, 19.

### Augustine's Style of Preaching

Augustine's style of preaching was unique for the medieval context of ministry. It was not just memorization of scripture and following the liturgical order of services, but it seemed to present the dynamic of prophetic preaching and praxis by staying true to Scripture while still addressing the issues of his time related to the poor.

According to Sanlon, "Augustine's style of preaching appears on a first-hand reading to be pedestrian and casual. His manner is more temperate than Tertullian or Cyprian, less stylized than Chrysologus, and less elegant than Ambrose. Sanlon goes on to say that a small number of academics have realized that the formal style of Augustine's preaching is pregnant with theological significance.<sup>54</sup> In addition, the pastoral context of congregational preaching shaped Augustine's manner of speaking:

It was Augustine's pastoral concern that so deeply engaged him with his congregation. It is the pastoral concern that saves him from making his preaching a personal display and individualistic performance or a work of oratorical art or self-expression.<sup>55</sup>

Sanlon states that "there appear to have been two aspects of Augustine's style which merit comment: the rhetorical and the theological. On the rhetorical side, his causal manner was the mark of a man skilled and gifted enough in his profession to wear his learning highly."<sup>56</sup> Sanlon further suggests Augustine did not labor or draw attention

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<sup>54</sup> Sanlon, *Augustine's Theology of Preaching*, 19.

<sup>55</sup> Matthew Levering, *The Theology of Augustine* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2013), xi.

<sup>56</sup> Levering, *The Theology of Augustine*, xi.

to his ability in rhetoric; neither was his use of rhetorical devices formulaic.<sup>57</sup> Some suggest while Augustine is deeply theological, secular rhetoric influenced his preaching.

### **The Theology of Augustine**

Augustine remains today a controversial thinker whose insights into the realities of God and salvation can be easily misunderstood. He wrote over one hundred treatises, countless letters, sermons, and more than five million words in all.<sup>58</sup> Although few scholars can become acquainted with all of his writings, there are certain pivotal works that one simply must know if one is interested in the development of Christian theology, biblical exegesis, and Western civilization.[2]<sup>59</sup>

Augustine wrote his longer works over a period of years. For example, the *City of God* took around thirteen years to complete, and *On the Trinity* may have taken longer. Yet each of his works is carefully orchestrated in unity. Matthew Levering, in his work, *The Theology of Augustine*, contends it is not enough to survey his work in its entirety in order to see how the great rhetorician weaves his ideas in service of Christian instruction. Levering believes there is no way to really understand Augustine unless you view his most important works in their entirety.<sup>60</sup>

Augustine offers a pattern of biblical reading, of living Scriptures, that invites [readers] to enjoy friendship with the Triune God who has created and redeemed

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<sup>57</sup> Levering, *The Theology of Augustine*, xii.

<sup>58</sup> Levering, *The Theology of Augustine*, xiii.

<sup>59</sup> Levering, *The Theology of Augustine*, xiii.

<sup>60</sup> Levering, *The Theology of Augustine*, xiii



[mankind]. Augustine's major disruptions and challenges – namely, Manichees, Donatists, and Pelagians, respectively.<sup>61</sup> According to Levering Augustine's *Answer to Faustus*, a Manichean is particularly important for its' defense of the Old Testament as Christian Scripture, especially through its insistence that the words and deeds of the Old Testament often refer typologically to Christ and the Church.<sup>62</sup>

Augustine's *Homilies on the First Epistle of John* shows his exegetical effort to explore the requirements of charity and end the fourth-century schism between Catholics and Donatists. Further, Levering believes that Augustine's work *On the Predestination of the Saints*, which belongs to his anti-Pelagian writings, sets forth the biblical evidence in favor of the utter gratuity of the eternal God's gift of salvation.<sup>63</sup>

What is even more impressive is that Augustine wrote in a variety of genres. For example, his work *Confessions* is autobiographical. It is an autobiography in the modern sense, given that it focuses on God, integrates Scripture heavily into its' presentation, and ends with a meditation on time, eternity, and the origin and goals of creatures.<sup>64</sup>

Levering shares Augustine's theological brilliance in two major works:

*The city of God* offers a view of Roman, biblical, and world history from creation to the eschatological new creation and reflects on what makes for a true society of peace. *On the Trinity* investigates how we can learn to know, love, and praise the Triune God and thereby be transformed in our knowing and loving so as to share in the eternal Trinity. Although each of these works is characterized by participatory ascent to God brought about by God "decent" in Christ Jesus and the Holy Spirit, the fact Augustine employs a different genre for each work helps him

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<sup>61</sup> Levering, *The Theology of Augustine*, xiii

<sup>62</sup> Levering, *The Theology of Augustine*, xiii.

<sup>63</sup> Levering, *The Theology of Augustine*, xiii.

<sup>64</sup> Levering, *The Theology of Augustine*, xiii–xiv.

to engage readers from all walks of life.<sup>65</sup>

*On Christian Doctrine* serves as a manual of instruction for Christian biblical interpretation, education, and preaching. Its genre is that of classical manuals on education and rhetoric. *Answers to Faustus*, a Manichean is a polemical work, but it takes up one of the most important Christian tasks – namely, the accounting for unity in the Old and New Testaments.<sup>66</sup> This work has had a significant impact on the Christian faith.

Finally, *Homilies on the First Epistle of John* exhibits Augustine, the biblical interpreter, bishop, and preacher, for whom the task of living out charity is paramount. Finally, *On the Predestination of the Saints* draws from the whole Scripture to mount a biblical argument for our absolute dependence on God's grace for salvation. We depend on God, who is perfect love.<sup>67</sup>

*On Christian Doctrine* seems to give a sense of Augustine's preoccupations as an interpreter and preacher of Scripture. Particularly important is his understanding of how God, in love, uses signs (words and deeds) to teach us to love God and each other.<sup>68</sup> Levering points out *Answer to Faustus*, a Manichean, because we encounter Augustine's insistence upon the unity of God's salvific teaching in Scripture: both the Old and New Testament teach us to love.<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> Levering, *The Theology of Augustine*, xiv.

<sup>66</sup> Levering, *The Theology of Augustine*, xiv.

<sup>67</sup> Levering, *The Theology of Augustine*, xiv.

<sup>68</sup> Levering, *The Theology of Augustine*, xiv.

<sup>69</sup> Levering, *The Theology of Augustine*, xiv

Bishop Augustine served for many years at Hippo in Northern Africa. As a Bishop, he wrote in a wide variety of genres and participated in numerous ecclesial and theological debates, most notably against the Donatists and the Pelagians. His major works against the Donatists focused largely on the unity and holiness of the Church.<sup>70</sup> Historians do not view Augustine as a prophetic preacher, but he is in his own right.

Saint Augustine was one of the greatest Christian thinkers of all time. It is amazing that almost sixteen centuries later, he is still one of the most quoted of all Christian writers.<sup>71</sup> His life and work are helpful as they also serve as the perfect foundation for the restoration of prophetic ministry elements in the Black Church.

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<sup>70</sup> Norman Geisler, *What Augustine Say* (Baker Book House, 1982) 9.

<sup>71</sup> Norman Geisler, *What Augustine Says* (Baker Book House, 1982) 9.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS**

#### **Introduction**

The primary focus of this chapter is to provide an examination of the theology of prophetic ministry. More specifically, this document attempts to address the theological implications of the restoration of prophetic ministry within the church through a truly collaborative teaching and discipleship process within the local congregation. Since theology tends to be contextual, therefore, this chapter addresses four areas of theology they are 1. Pneumatology 2. Practical Theology, 3. Black Theology, 4., and 5. Ecclesiology.

Pneumatology is the theology of the spirit and, specifically the holy spirit. The purpose of this chapter is to provide a definitive understanding of both the theological and spiritual foundation of prophetic ministry and examine the implications for the church today. It is important that clergy see that prophetic ministry is spiritual and has implications for the community and even political implications that may force the church to challenge issues that adversely affect the congregation and community.

Further, this section is needed to understand and illuminate the biblical foundation of the theology found in the primary text of this project (Luke 4:18), as Jesus states:

“The spirit of the Lord is upon me because he has anointed me

to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight to the blind, to set the oppressed free.”<sup>1</sup>

As a result, the literature suggests that there is a connection to practical theology. Practical theology can be interpreted in a variety of ways. Further, the literature implies it is an academic discipline that examines and reflects on the practice of ministry to understand the theological implications of those practices within the communities we serve. In fact, the literature seems to reveal that practical theology is inclusive of pastoral theology, preaching, prayer, Christian counseling, and other forms of pastoral care within and outside the context of the church. Since prophetic ministry trends to address issues of the oppressed and injustice, it is only natural that churches have a voice in the black community.

Ultimately the platform of the preacher is the black church, and therefore ecclesiology has to be studied and examined thoroughly. Ecclesiology tends to be the study of churches, especially church buildings. However, in this paper, it is defined as theology that is applied to the nature and structure of the Christian Church. The ecclesiae, which is a significant part of our community and has been at the forefront of many social issues, in the era of “Black Lives Matter,” the church and particularly the black church, has been dangerously silent. This silence has significant implications in relation to prophetic ministry and social justice. What has come out of practical theology, Black theology, and ecclesiology is the formation of the Black church. There is a natural convergence between Black theology and prophetic ministry. Black Theology is a

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<sup>1</sup> Luke 4:18 (*New Revised Standard Version*).

theology that deals primarily with the African American community, that views the scriptures in a way that's more relevant for Black people. This theology views the Christian faith as a matter of liberation here and now, rather than just in the afterlife.

### **Pneumatology: The Theology of the Spirit**

Pneumatology, simply put, is the theology of the spirit. According to Nelson's Illustrated Bible Dictionary, the word "spirit" refers to the Spirit of God, the Holy Spirit. In the Old Testament, the Spirit occasionally came upon people to give them the power to do God's will or enable them to serve God mainly.<sup>2</sup> This attribute is seen in the primary biblical text of this project, in (Luke 4:18) when Jesus says, "*The spirit of the Lord is upon me because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, and to let the oppressed go free*"<sup>3</sup> Clearly, the spirit has been placed upon him for a special task of prophetic ministry, and there are similar accounts in the Old Testament for example:

The spirit of the Lord enabled Samson to kill a young lion with his bare hands (Judges 14:5–6). Earlier, the spirit of God has given Bezaleel's wisdom and skill to build the tabernacle (Exodus 31:3). The Spirit of the Lord also enabled the judges to lead Israel to military victory (Judges 3:10; 11:29) and the prophets to prophesy (Numbers 24:2; Ezekiel 11:5)<sup>4</sup>

These are just a few samples of spirits coming upon someone for a special purpose. In the New Testament, the Holy Spirit was an even more attractive presence

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<sup>2</sup> Ronald F. Youngblood, *Nelson's Illustrated Bible Dictionary* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1995), 1198.

<sup>3</sup> Luke 4:18 (*New Revised Standard Version*).

<sup>4</sup> Youngblood, *Nelson's Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, 1198.

among the people of God. Some Biblical scholars argue that the Holy Spirit was the agent of the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies found (Acts 1:16; 2:16–21; 3:18; 28:25:25–27), and He continued to inspire Christian prophets and workers to work His will on earth (Acts 2:4; 19:6)<sup>5</sup> This observed even further in (Acts 10:44–48), when the Holy Spirit came upon new Christians and in (2 Cori. 3:18; 2 Thess. 2:13) the Spirit purified and sanctified the saints.<sup>6</sup>

According to the Baker Evangelical Dictionary of Theology:

The Spirit of Mankind fulfills its true destiny. It lives in a conscious relationship to God, its creator. Himself the eternal Spirit who out of nothing made the heavens, the earth, and “their starry host by the breath [spirit] of his mouth” (Psalms 33:6), with man-made in His image and likeness (Genesis 1:27–28; 2:7).<sup>7</sup>

John’s Gospel notes that God is called a “Spirit” and that He should be worshipped in spirit and truth (John 4:24), and Hebrews 12:9 indicates that He is the “Father of Spirits.” Baker’s Theological Dictionary of the Bible contends that the word translated spirit in the NT is *Pneuma* which is the counterpart to the OT word *ruah*. While it occasionally means wind (John 3:8) and breath in (Matthew 27:50; 2 Thessalonians. 2:8), it is most generally translated as spirit. – an incorporeal, feeling, and intelligent being.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Youngblood, *Nelson’s Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, 1198.

<sup>6</sup> Youngblood, *Nelson’s Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, 1198.

<sup>7</sup> Walter A. Elwell, Ed. *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2001), 1133.

<sup>8</sup> Walter A. Elwell, ed. *Baker Theological Dictionary of the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2000), 744.

### Practical Theology

The previous section discussed issues related to the spirit, and clearly, Jesus is connected to the spirit. Thus, the spirit guides us in ministry practice, hence as a part of prophetic ministry. We embrace practical theology. Practical theology is often understood through what it does. Practical theology holds in deliberation, theological revelation, theoretical science, and the practice of ministry. Therein exists a critical relationship between theology, theory, and practice.<sup>9</sup>

According to Dale P. Andrews, this relationship should not be understood in any linear notion. He contends that practical theology is not simply a science of diagnosis and application within a selective discipline. Rather, practical theology is an engaging process between theology, theory, and practice, with each one feeding back upon the others.<sup>10</sup> This has implications as it relates to approaches to hermeneutics and has greater implications with regards to interpretation, application, and preaching the biblical text. Practical theology has implications in pastoral theology and is inclusive of preaching and especially prophetic preaching and praxis. In fact, Andrews states the following:

The term “*praxis*” attempts to capture this reflexive quality of practical theology for effective ministry within the mission of the church. The analysis of actual situations is important to the practical theological method, which would include individual and corporate experiences. Accordingly, the method cannot, nor should it, escape an inductive approach. The reflexive quality of praxis places inductive methods in

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<sup>9</sup> Dale P. Andrews, *Practical Theology for Black Churches: Bridging Black Theology and African American Folk Religion* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002), 1.

<sup>10</sup> Andrews, *Practical Theology for Black Churches: Bridging Black Theology and African American Folk Religion*, 1.



dialogue with deductive ones in method practical theology both feeds praxis and feeds upon it.<sup>11</sup>

Therefore, it is important to understand the ministry and mission of black churches have been grounded in the story of God's involvement in humanity. God's activity in human history on behalf of the oppressed and disadvantaged constitutes the formative properties of a black biblical hermeneutical. Further, the primary task for the black preacher then is the revelation of God's interest and activity in the hearers' immediate lives.<sup>12</sup> The preaching ministry is an essential part of this process. If the preacher is to have credibility, they must present and interpret the biblical text in spiritually and socially relevant ways to congregational life and the shared experiences of black people. Andrew suggests the ability to regulate biblical revelation to the experiences of racial and economic oppression weighs heavily on the black community's trust in the preacher's competence.<sup>13</sup>

Before meandering further, it is important to briefly explain "pastoral theology" since it has implications for practical theology. Pastoral theology is a form of practical theology because it focuses on the practice of ministry, with particular attention to the systematic definition of the pastoral office and its' function. Pastoral theology is also a

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<sup>11</sup> Andrews, *Practical Theology for Black Churches: Bridging Black Theology and African American Folk Religion*, 1-2.

<sup>12</sup> Andrews, *Practical Theology for Black Churches: Bridging Black Theology and African American Folk Religion*, 18.

<sup>13</sup> Andrews, *Practical Theology for Black Churches: Bridging Black Theology and African American Folk Religion*, 23.

form of systematic theology because it attempts a systematic, consistent reflection on the offices and gifts of ministry and the integral relationship with the task of ministry.<sup>14</sup>

However, James H. Harris provides a slightly different perspective when defining pastoral theology. He contends that pastoral theology is liberation theology because it is grounded in practice. It deals with developing and implementing policies and programs in the church and community that convey the meaning of Christianity in practical life and situations.<sup>15</sup>

Andrews contends that the preached word becomes a communal activity rooted in African traditions. He has observed that this worship style reflects the larger dialogical, West African oral culture. Black congregations feel free to express themselves, which is seen as meaningful participation in the preaching event. Usually, though, black congregations respond to the preacher when something mentioned touches upon the life experiences overheard.<sup>16</sup> As a result, in prophetic ministry, communal worship, and black preaching, a black tradition of pastoral care has emerged.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Thomas C. Oden, *Pastoral Theology: Essentials of Ministry* (San Francisco, CA: Harper, 1983), x.

<sup>15</sup> James H. Harris, *Pastoral Theology: A Black Church Perspective* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1991), ix.

<sup>16</sup> Andrews, *Practical Theology for Black Churches: Bridging Black Theology and African American Folk Religion*, 22.

<sup>17</sup> Andrews, *Practical Theology for Black Churches: Bridging Black Theology and African American Folk Religion*, 23.

## Black Theology

Through exegetical theology and practical theology within the realm of the black church and black preaching has emerged a concept called black theology. Dwight N Hopkins articulates it this way:

Black theology of liberation interweaves three related experiences. “Theology” signifies the long tradition of the forms of Christianity beginning with the life of Jesus in, what we today call, North East Africa or West Asia. Liberation designates the specific mission of Jesus the Anointed One on earth; that is to say, the liberation of oppressed communities to attain power and wealth. And black means the multiple manifestations of black people's socially constructed worldviews, aesthetics, and identities. In brief, black theology of liberation answers the question: how does Jesus’ gospel of liberation throughout the Christian tradition reveal itself in black culture? Ultimately, arising out of the particularity of the black experience, the goal is to help craft healthy communities and healthy individuals throughout the world.<sup>18</sup>

James H. Cone, who is considered the father of black theology, indicated that black liberation theology was created by black theologians and preachers who rejected this white teaching about the meek, long-suffering Jesus. They called it hypocritical and racist. Cone asserts their Christology focused on the revolutionary Black Christ who “preached good news to the poor,” “proclaim release to the captives,” and “let the oppressed go free” (Luke 4:18f).<sup>19</sup> Cones further argues that this is black common sense theology, which is deeply embedded in the radical side of black religious history and the

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<sup>18</sup> Dwight N. Hopkins, *The Cambridge Companion to Black Theology* (Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 3.

<sup>19</sup> James H. Cone, *God of the Oppressed, Revised Edition* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1977), xvi.

source out of which black liberation theology emerged.<sup>20</sup> Faith in Jesus' Cross inspired 50,000 Blacks in Montgomery (1955–56) to boycott city buses for 381 days.<sup>21</sup>

Hopkins argues Black theology is an academic discipline among darker-skinned peoples, which has grown into a global dynamic. In various parts of the world, black Christians or people of faith are developing constructive theological statements regarding their belief in and practice with a God of culture, political, and individual liberation.<sup>22</sup> In fact, Hopkins notes five specific characteristics of black theology, which are the following:

1. Black theology is a complete and integrative liberation, including the cultural right to self-identity and the political right of self-determination, with both flowing from a moral imperative.
2. The starting point is a God of liberation dwelling with and acting on behalf of the poor and specifically dark-skinned peoples at the bottom of society.
3. Affirming methodology of all forms of black theology concurs with the important interplay between issues that arise out of poor black lives and the role that theology serves in discerning the depth of prophetic faith in these lives and movements.
4. Black theology has a simultaneous relationship to various public institutions such as the Academy, the local church, and the civic community focused on religion and justice because Black theology began out of church and community concerns.
5. Scholars and practitioners see black as a radical category of both a social and phenotypic; as a result, race is socially and contextually defined.<sup>23</sup>

Black theology grapples deeply and sincerely with the human questions of today. It searches for definite answers to these challenges because many of those questions across the world are exasperated when they pertain to the darker-skin communities.

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<sup>20</sup> Cone, *God of the Oppressed*, revised edition, xvi.

<sup>21</sup> Cone, *God of the Oppressed*, revised edition, xvii.

<sup>22</sup> Hopkins, *The Cambridge Companion to Black Theology*, 16.

<sup>23</sup> Hopkins, *The Cambridge Companion to Black Theology*, 16.

Consequently, black theology reminds everyone continually of the necessity of experiencing a passion for hurting people love for humanity, and especially those without a voice.<sup>24</sup>

However, Anthony B. Bradley takes a different view toward black theology and at times seems critical of it. He argues black liberation theology was doomed from the beginning because its initial biblical and theological presuppositions were grounded in the reduction of the black experience in America to that of the victim. Bradley contends that early in the development of black liberation theology, black theologians like J. Deotis Roberts clearly pointed out core weaknesses but, like most other critics, simply did not go deep enough to the presupposition level.<sup>25</sup> Bradley argues that for any black theology to serve the black church in the future, it must be formulated within biblical constrained presuppositions. Contextualizing the redemptive story in the black experience, then, can be done with the strictest fidelity to the will of God for human persons and creation, personally and structurally, as revealed in the scriptures.<sup>26</sup> Black theology only has a future if it presupposes the Triune God and seeks to interpret the black experience through the lens of the whole scripture.<sup>27</sup>

Henry Mitchell and James Cone both venomously disagree with Bradley. According to Mitchell, “the black preacher must be ear deep in the condition of the

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<sup>24</sup> Hopkins, *The Cambridge Companion to Black Theology*, 17.

<sup>25</sup> Anthony B. Bradley, *Liberating Black Theology: The Bible and the Black Experience in America* (New York, NY: Crossway, 2022), 15.

<sup>26</sup> Bradley, *Liberating Black Theology: The Bible and the Black Experience in America*, 15.

<sup>27</sup> Bradley, *Liberating Black Theology: The Bible and the Black Experience in America*, 15.

people, and out of this comes to the easy dialogue between the preacher and the people, whose lives are intimately close together - so close together that the themes which invade the conscious although one also invade the other.”<sup>28</sup>

Since the literature indicates that all theology is contextual, Bradley's theory would not be true to contextual theologically. Frederick Ware refers to this as one of many black methodologies and the development of the black hermeneutical school. Here is how the Black Hermeneutical School began:

Charles B Copper, a biblical scholar at the Interdenominational Theological Center, raised the earliest awareness of a shared methodological perspective among black theologians. In the Black Biblical Consultation held during the annual meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature in 1984, Copher read from a paper discussing the differences between James H. Cone, Henry H. Mitchell, Joseph A. Johnson, Major J. Jones, Robert A Bennett, and William Mason relative to their shared quests for a “black hermeneutic.”<sup>29</sup>

This study revealed an attempt to understand the meaning of the term “black hermeneutic,” and for many black theologians and the term was synonymous with “exegesis” and thus revealed a shared perspective of black pastors serving churches. Their views on biblical interpretation as earlier as the 18<sup>th</sup> century this debate continued throughout the 1980s and 1990s.<sup>30</sup> This was an attempt to help black churches recapture the faith and spirituality that made our communities uniquely connected.

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<sup>28</sup> Henry H Mitchell, *Black Preaching: The Recovery of a Powerful Art* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1990), 106.

<sup>29</sup> Frederick L. Ware, *Methodologies of Black Theology* (Chicago, IL: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2002), 28.

<sup>30</sup> Ware, *Methodology's of Black Theology*, 28.

## Ecclesiology

Whether it is exegetical theology, practical theology, or black theology, they all converge at one central venue, which is the church, the *ecclesia*. Therefore, no real examination of prophetic preaching related to theology can be complete without discussing ecclesiology. Therefore, this paper defines ecclesiology as the doctrine of the church. It is the study of Christian theology that focuses on the Christian Church in terms of its' biblical origins, historical emergence, theology, and doctrines. "And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock, I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it." (Matthew 16:18).<sup>31</sup>

According to Veli-Matti Karkkainen, it might come as a surprise to many students of theology that ecclesiology, the doctrine of the church, did not gain its own established standing in systematic theology until the time of the Reformation, and even then, many crucial topics, as they are discussed nowadays and systematic treatments of the church, received hardly any attention.<sup>32</sup>

However, it is worth noting that Karkkainen provides a survey and analysis of the major ecclesiological traditions, and he even outlines theories of theologians and offers any number of contextual approaches. Some of these include Eastern Orthodox, Roman Catholic, Lutheran, Pentecostal/Charismatic, Latin American, and even the Non-church movement in Asia. In fact, he even mentions the independent churches of Africa, yet he does not recognize the Black church and its unique ecclesiology.

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<sup>31</sup> Matthew 16:18 (*New Revised Standard Version*).

<sup>32</sup> Veli-Matti Karkkainen, *An Introduction to Ecclesiology: Ecumenical, Historical & Global Perspective* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2002), 9.

Karkkainen begins his book by asking some challenging, relevant, and even offensive questions in relation to ecclesiology:

The expansive growth of Christian churches outside the traditional “Christian” West has also pulled another challenging question to theology, namely, how to account culturally for the existence of churches in various contexts. What does it require to be a church amidst an animistic culture in Africa or highly spiritualistic Asian cultures? What from mainly western heritage is transferable to the rest of the world, and what has to be revised or corrected? Furthermore, there are other cultural contextual challenges: what would the church look like if it were made if it were to make women and other minorities

feel at home and find their potential? Or, what does it mean for a church to be a church for those who struggle for freedom and equality?<sup>33</sup>

Clearly, the above is an indication of the bias of scholars as it relates to both black culture and the black church. That is, referring to “African culture as animistic” is not only offensive but shows a bias in studying comparative ecclesiology. Karkkainen claims the main focus of his book is “ecclesiology proper,” which he says focuses on the question of (ecclesiology) of the church, that is, what makes the church, [the church as we understand it], or what are the conditions for being a church. He indicates the secondary part of the book deals with the question of ministry, the structure, and the sacrament of the church.<sup>34</sup>

However, Karkkainen’s view of comparative ecclesiology is extremely limited and lacks objectivity because it does not include the black church. As a result of this

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<sup>33</sup> Karkkaainen, *An Introduction to Ecclesiology: Ecumenical, Historical & Global Perspectives*, 9.

<sup>34</sup> Karkkaainen, *An Introduction to Ecclesiology: Ecumenical, Historical & Global Perspectives*, 14.



continued Eurocentric bias, scholars such as Carter G. Woodson, E. Franklin Frazier, C. Eric Lincoln, and Lawrence Mamiya have provided research and analysis of the black church, which recognizes its ecclesiology and culture as both relevant and necessary.

Further, the development and expansion of scholarly research on various aspects of the black church and black Christian faith have been prevalent since the 1960s. From this scholarly research emerged what is referred to as Black Church Studies.

Black church studies as a discrete academic enterprise began in the 1970s with teaching, scholarship, and ministerial practices focus on developing the worship life, ecclesial practices, and theological understandings of African American churches. The writings in Black Church Studies arose largely as a response to earlier commentators: W.E.B. DuBois in *The Negro Church* (1903), Carter G Woodson in *The History of the Negro Church* (1921), E. Franklin Frazier in *The Negro Church in America* (1963), and Benjamin E. Mays and Joseph Nicholson in *The Negro's Church* (1969) among others. These writers defined an exam in the African American church using assimilation to the white mainline church as well as oppression by white mainstream society as the yardstick to measure the existence and evolution of the Black Church.<sup>35</sup>

According to Lawrence H. Mamiya, as an institution, the Black Church is unrivaled in its historical influence on Black culture and among Black people. As the only coherent institutional area to emerge from slavery, it still carries burdens. It performs functions far beyond its spiritual ones – in education, economics, politics, art, music, counseling and therapy, community outreach, etc. It is the only institution where black people feel ownership when they speak of “my pastor” and “my church.”<sup>36</sup> In understanding the power of the Black Church, it must first be understood that there is no

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<sup>35</sup> Stacey Floyd-Thomas, Juan Floyd-Thomas, Carol B. Duncan, Steven G. Ray, Jr., and Nancy Lynne Westfield, *Black Church Studies: An Introduction* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2007), xix–xx.

<sup>36</sup> Floyd-Thomas et al, *Black Church Studies: An Introduction*, xiii–xx.

disjunction between the Black Church and the Black community. The Church is the spiritual face of the black community whether one is a “church member” or not,<sup>37</sup>

Today the seven major black church denominations are the following: The African Methodist Episcopal (A.M.E.) Church; The African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church (A.M.E.Z.) Church; the Christian Methodist Episcopal (C.M.E.) Church; the National Baptist Convention, U.S.A., Incorporated (NBC); the National Baptist Convention of America Unincorporated (NBCA); the Progressive National Baptist Convention (PNBC); and the Church of God in Christ (C.O.G.I.C.). It is estimated that more than 80% of all black Christians are in these seven denominations, with some of the smaller communions accounting for an additional 6 percent.<sup>38</sup>

In addition, it is essential to note that the black church emerges from the religious, cultural, and social experiences of Black people. With its roots on the continent of Africa and the Middle Passage, the Black Church provided structure and meaning for African people and their descendants in the Americas. They struggled to survive the ravages and brutality of slavery and racial oppression. Further, the Black church continues to function as the center of Black life, culture, and heritage in U.S. history.<sup>39</sup>

For many decades, the form of the Black Church has been described primarily as those churches whose worship life and cultural sensibilities have reflected, historically and traditionally, a connection to the larger African American community. This ecclesial

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<sup>37</sup> E. Franklin Frazier and C. Eric Lincoln, *The Negro Church in America/The Black Church Since Frazier* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2007), 115.

<sup>38</sup> C. Eric Lincoln and Lawrence H Mamiya, *The Black Church in the African American Experience* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1990), 1.

<sup>39</sup> Floyd-Thomas et al, *Black Church Studies: An Introduction*, xxiii.

formation had three primary expressions: (a) independent Black, Methodist, and Holiness-Pentecostal denominations; (b) Black congregations and fellowship in predominantly white denominations such as Roman Catholics, Presbyterians, and Episcopalians; and (c) more recently, non-denominational Christian churches that have multicultural, multiracial, and multiethnic membership but the ministerial leadership and culture identity is African American in nature.<sup>40</sup>

### **Conclusion**

Throughout this paper, the research has revealed theological implications related to prophetic preaching and praxis within the Black church. These implications are profound and are worthy of further examination as it relates to exegetical theology, practical theology, black theology, and ecclesiology. There is an interrelatedness of these four theological perspectives to prophetic preaching, and it begins with the preacher/scholar and/or pastor/teacher. The spiritual leader's perspective on hermeneutics and practical theology can influence congregational life and understanding of theology and the church.

Preaching is what shapes the theological understanding of the culture of the church and the perspective of the congregants. A significant part of preaching is interpretation. The Apostle Paul in 2 Timothy 2:15 states it this way, "Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved by him, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly explaining the word of truth."<sup>41</sup> As noted earlier in the document, the

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<sup>40</sup> Stacey Floyd-Thomas et al, *Black Church Studies: An Introduction*, xxiii – xxiv.

<sup>41</sup> Timothy 2:15 (*New Revised Standard Version*).

role of the scripture in black preaching is essential, and the preacher has the task of interpreting the Word of God and making it relevant in the lives of the hearers.<sup>42</sup>

The literature reveals a distrust of white theology amongst black scholars and theologians. The central problem is that white theology has excluded black people from its universe of discourse and its area of meaningful concern. In doing so, white theology encourages the notion that black people are lesser beings in the eyes of God.<sup>43</sup>

In fact, according to black scholars Frazier and Lincoln:

In sum, white theology is an entrapment that leaves the Black Christian without hope, without recourse, and without identity, and leaves white Christians with unrealistic views about themselves and about Christian responsibility. None of the hard questions about meaning or morality are answered.<sup>44</sup>

Today prophetic voices such as Jeremiah A. Wright, Jr., Jamal Bryant, and Fredrick D. Haynes III have continued to illuminate similar ideas to the black community and the larger society. Black theology is, in some sense, what is missing from white theology. To the degree that it fills its own best intentions, it is the restoration of a deficit incurred through the habitual malfunctioning of a racist calculus.<sup>45</sup>

Both practical theology and Black theology overlap amid utterances of prophetic preaching in and outside of the church. Raphael Warnock argues that historically the faith

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<sup>42</sup> Andrews, *Practical theology for Black Church: Bridging Black Theology and African American Folk Religion*, 18.

<sup>43</sup> Frazier and Lincoln, *The Negro Church in America/The Black Church Since Frazier*. 144.

<sup>44</sup> Frazier and Lincoln, *The Negro Church in America/The Black Church Since Frazier*. 145.

<sup>45</sup> <sup>65</sup>Frazier and Lincoln, *The Negro Church in America/The Black Church Since Frazier*, 145.

of the black church has been shaped and characterized by two complementary yet competing sensibilities: revivalistic piety and radical protests.<sup>46</sup> Warnock further states:

In the North American context, both have been present from the beginning, and it is the dialogue and *differences* between the two that constitute the central tension in African American Christian faith. Moreover, it is this tension, more than anything else, that plays itself out in the divided mind of the black church and the dialogue between black pastors and black theologians regarding the church's essential mission.<sup>47</sup>

Warnock expands these arguments brilliantly in his book, *The Divided Mind of the Black Church*, and he challenges the church's theological identity of piety or protest? Warnock suggests that Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. awakened a black eschatological faith through his preaching and praxis [on] its activist aside, creatively giving voice to a doctrine of the church that emphasized its mission as an instrument of racial protests and social transformation.<sup>48</sup>

Eric Mason believes what is needed is prophetic preaching. Mason argues that prophetic preaching is the bridge between the solid doctrine of conservative Christianity and the Christian ethics of the liberal perspective. Without it, we can easily remain in our own camp, content to cast aspersions and judgments on those on the other side. We desperately need those voices crying in the wilderness, making way for his Kingdom

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<sup>46</sup> Raphael G. Warnock, *The Divided Mind of the Black Church: Theology, Piety, & Public Witness* (New York, NY: New York University Press, 1990), 13.

<sup>47</sup> Warnock, *The Divided Mind of the Black Church: Theology, Piety, & Public Witness*, 13.

<sup>48</sup> Warnock, *The Divided Mind of the Black Church: Theology, Piety, & Public Witness*, 37.

purposes on earth.<sup>49</sup> Further, Mason believes prophetic preaching is big picture visionary preaching that is biblically sound and culturally awake and informed.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> Eric Mason, *Woke Church: An Urgent Call for Christians in America to Confront Racism and Injustice* (Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2018), 116–117.

<sup>50</sup> Mason, *Woke Church: An Urgent Call for Christians in America to Confront Racism and Injustice*, 117.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **INTERDISCIPLINARY FOUNDATIONS**

#### **Introduction**

Restoration of prophetic ministry in the Black Church, as well as the community, naturally lends itself to an interdisciplinary approach in ministry practice. During the civil rights movement, pastors and churches engaged themselves in community organizing communities, civil disobedience, and varied forms of economic empowerment and politics. In short, the prophetic movements of the 1960s hence, it was very much an interdisciplinary enterprise. This resulted in the prophetic activism of black preachers, such as the late Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Minister Malcolm X of the Nation of Islam, and later Rev. Jesse Jackson, Sr; and now most recently Dr. Jeremiah Wright, Jr. and Dr. Fredrick Haynes III. There have always been strains of interdisciplinary collaboration within the fabric of the civil rights movement and other community movements.

This chapter examines the implications of interdisciplinary approaches to engaging prophetic ministry through the interrelated lenses of politics, criminal justice, and economics. Our approaches to social justice, economic empowerment, and community outreach always lend themselves to ultimately creating political awareness within our communities. Thus, politics is the common denominator in these

interdisciplinary approaches to [community change] and attempts to relate the biblical text to the existential reality of being Black in the United States.<sup>1</sup>

Black Church Studies scholars argue that biblical interpretation within the Black community takes its' own context seriously, as well as the context within the [biblical] text. Therefore, it becomes necessary to utilize perspectives from ethnography, literary analysis, historiography, music, and drama to understand contemporary black existence.<sup>2</sup> According to Dale P. Andrews, an existential hermeneutic in ecclesiology suggests that people derive knowledge from their social context, which in turn contributes to their individual and communal horizons of religious meaning.[8]<sup>3</sup>

Andrew argues that the social context influences the theological interpretations of ecclesiology. An exchange occurs between the biblical or doctrinal theology and the church existential concept of ecclesiology. This ecclesiology, in turn, accents [the] social-political liberation frame of the Black Church.<sup>4</sup> More simply stated, the black church, and particularly the preacher, has a foot both in the sanctuary and outside of it. He or she often has significant influence in the community, which has been a part of the character and culture of our church communities for decades.

As a result of that ecclesiology, this chapter explores, as noted earlier, the interdisciplinary aspects of the area of “politics” or political science. The literature

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<sup>1</sup> Stacey Floyd-Thomas, Juan Floyd Thomas, Carol B Duncan, Steven G. Ray, Jr. and Nancy Lynn, *Black Studies: An Introduction* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2007), 63.

<sup>2</sup> Ware, *Methodologies of Black Theology*, 154–155.

<sup>3</sup> Dale P. Andrews, *Practical Theology for Black Churches: Bridging Black Theology and African*.

<sup>4</sup> Ware, *Methodologies of Black Theology*, 155.



indicates that “political science” as an academic endeavor and politics, in general, is naturally interdisciplinary because it is inclusive of so many parts of society and the black experience, such as culture, health, social ethics, education, and economics, as well as religion itself. Further, this chapter defines politics in the context of the United States Democratic governmental system, such as the policies, legislation, and other governmental factors that impact the larger society. Thus, this paper defines and views politics as what determines what we do as a society and the policies we implement that can significantly impact citizens.

Since many black religious groups are often engaged in social justice activities, another area of exploration will be the criminal justice system. The black community has had a peculiar relationship with the criminal justice system, and this section offers a brief snapshot of that relationship. This document views criminal justice as the system of justice that deals with offenders, victims, prevention of crimes, focusing on institutions such as the police, prosecutors, defense lawyers, courts, and prisons.

These policies have implications for the last section, which is economics. Economics will be viewed through the lens of the economic system, which this chapter defines as a system of production, resource allocation, and distribution of goods and services within a society or a specific geographic region.

Therefore, by looking through the lens of politics, criminal justice, and economics, we can gain a holistic understanding of prophetic ministry and find ways and means to restore it as a viable force in our communities. It is through prophetic preachers and their preaching this will happen. Each section brings the reader to a greater

understanding of the crucial reality. We must have churches willing to engage in prophetic ministry that empowers the community instead of exploiting it.

### **Politics**

Religious appeals can be very effective for political mobilization, and increasingly political elites are using religious themes to mobilize the faithful to act. A religious group's social situation, creedal forces, and institutional interests are potential sources of aggravation and complaint.<sup>5</sup> It was these kinds of forces that created the emergence of Martin Luther King, Jr., and Malcolm X to become both prophets and political activists who demanded a government that lived up to its' creed of freedom and justice for all. Their movement, known as the civil rights movement, was also a display of political power and showed America and the world the impact of politics on everyday life. In addition, these men were painting a canvas of a portrait of what prophetic ministry and activism can and should look like.

According to James H. Cone, Martin and Malcolm realized that the African-American struggle was not just a domestic affair, but it was also an international issue. Early in the Montgomery bus boycott, Martin made the connection. He referred to the worldwide struggle for freedom as the *Zeitgeist*, the cosmic, divine spirit realizing itself in history.<sup>6</sup> Malcolm expressed an even closer relationship between Blacks in the United

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<sup>5</sup> Wald, Kenneth D. & Calhoun-Brown, Allison. *Religion and Politics in the United States*, 7<sup>th</sup> ed. (LANHAM, MD: Roman & Littlefield, 2014), 129.

<sup>6</sup> James H. Cone, *Malcolm & Martin & America: A Dream or a Nightmare* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2012), 312.

States and Third World peoples. As a black nationalist, he emphasized that *all* non-European peoples of the world are a part of one family, which constituted the majority of humankind.<sup>7</sup>

Besides Malcolm's and Martin's accent on politics and culture, their *internationalism* was their most important contribution to the African American struggle for freedom in the United States. Malcolm's influence outside of the United States has been less than Martin's. But his international perspective is just as important. Because of both Martin and Malcolm, African Americans have become much more internationally minded, supporting the anti-apartheid struggle in South Africa and the struggles of the poor around the world. Freedom fighters everywhere should join hands as one people and declare war on injustice. Martin was right: "*Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere.*"<sup>8</sup> In much of the literature, there is a common thread of determination towards fighting injustice that continues to be a catalyst in Black Studies.

Today, racial capitalism uses prisons to manage marginalized populations, especially people of color. Neoliberal policies in the last decades have shifted massive amounts of wealth from working and middle-class families to the wealthiest one percent through tax cuts, deregulation, and cutting social programs. These policies shred social safety nets [17] and render millions of unemployed, poor, unhealthy, and homeless, creating surplus populations.<sup>9</sup> These policies reveal the impact of politics on communities

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<sup>7</sup> Cone, *Malcolm & Martin & America: A Dream or a Nightmare*, 312.

<sup>8</sup> Cone, *Malcolm & Martin & America: A Dream or a Nightmare*, 312.

<sup>9</sup> Davis, *The Little Book of Race and Restorative Justice: Black Lives, Healing, and US Social Transformation*, 67.

of color and highlight an increasing need for the black community to stay engaged in the political system.

Black people hold the balance of electoral power in some of the nation's largest cities. At the same time, population experts predict that black Americans will constitute the majority in a dozen or more of the largest cities in the next ten to twenty years. In Washington, D.C., Newark, and New Jersey, they already are in the majority. In Detroit, Baltimore, Cleveland, and St. Louis, they represent one-third or slightly more of the population; in Oakland, Chicago, Philadelphia, and Cincinnati, they constitute well over one-fourth.<sup>10</sup> Historically this is the result of the mass migration of blacks from the south to the north. After World War I, black migration increased and intensified during World War II. They moved to Pittsburg, Akron, Gary, Kansas City, Cincinnati, Philadelphia, Washington, Chicago, New York, and so forth.<sup>11</sup>

These majorities in cities have yielded some political victories at the local level with the elections of Coleman Young in Detroit 1974–1994 and Harold Washington in Chicago 1983–1987. The inspired candidacy of Douglas Wilder to become the first black Governor of Virginia from 1990 – 1994 and in the history of the country, and Reverend Jesse Jackson, Sr.'s historic runs for the presidency in 1984 and 1988, garnered many registered Black voters and a more prominent voice in the Democratic Party. Some of the literature credits Jackson with opening the door for former President Barack Obama.

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<sup>10</sup> Kwame Ture & Charles V. Hamilton, *Black Power: The Politics of Liberation* (New York, NY: Vintage Books, 1992), 149.

<sup>11</sup> Ture & Hamilton, *Black Power: The Politics of Liberation*, 151.

Black women also made their mark in the political arena, beginning with U.S. Congresswoman Shirley Chisholm, who ran for president during the 1970s. In addition, Shirley Franklin served as Atlanta's first African American female Mayor from 2002 – to 2010. Most recently, Keisha Lance-Bottoms elected 2017 present Lori Elaine, selected 2019 to present as Chicago's first female mayor, and the list goes on.

Kwame Ture and Charles Hamilton argue black and colored peoples are saying in a clear voice that they intend to determine for themselves the kinds of political, social, and economic systems they will live under the period of necessity. This means that existing systems of the dominant, oppressive group having the entire spectrum of values, beliefs, traditions, and institutions - will have to be challenged and changed. It is not expected that this fundamental scrutiny will be led by those who benefit or even have expectations to benefit from the status quo.<sup>12</sup> Black politicians are a significant part of the change that is needed, but what's needed in the U.S. House and Senate is more meaningful legislation.

With that said, many tend to forget that many of these politicians came out of the church and were groomed by it and disciplined in their thinking about community. It is also often forgotten that each election cycle that the Black Church is asked to open its' doors during hours of worship during election years to allow politicians to come in and share words of hope and inspiration. Some even often promise in God's house that they have no intention of keeping, still the church must vote to have impactful legislation in Washington, D.C.

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<sup>12</sup> Ture & Hamilton, *Black Power: The Politics of Liberation*, 179.

In his book, *The Color of Law*, Richard Rothstein provides an excellent example of this issue of impactful legislation. In 2015, The Obama administration unveiled a rule to implement an underappreciated provision of the 1968 Fair Housing Act that required jurisdictions that receive federal funds to “affirmatively further” the purposes of the law.<sup>13</sup> In fact, according to Rothstein:

The rule instructed cities, towns, and suburbs to assess their concentrations (or absence) of disadvantaged populations and identify goals to remedy segregated conditions. The rule seemed to assume that segregated white communities wanted to do the right thing but didn't have adequate information. Giving suburbs around the country the benefit of the doubt may have been a smart way to encourage them to fulfill their “affirmatively furthering” obligations; left unsaid was what HUD might do if suburbs don't take the steps necessary to advance integration. Did the Obama administration plan to deny federal funds to suburbs that remain segregated?<sup>14</sup>

Rothstein further explains that police killings of young black men in 2014 and 2015 called renewed attention to our racial divide. The presidential election of 2016 revealed that the nation was almost evenly split between those who believed that we had done too much to remedy racial inequality and those who think we've done not nearly enough. In early 2017, congressional Republicans proposed legislation to prohibit the enforcement of the “affirmatively furthering” rule. In a real sense, conservative Republicans endorsed the idea of continued racial segregation in US communities; and it revealed how the government at varying levels had been an impetus for systemic racism.

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<sup>13</sup> Richard Rothstein, *The Color of Law: A Forgotten History of How Our Government Segregated America* (New York, NY: Liverlight Publishing, 2017), 200.

<sup>14</sup> Richard Rothstein, *The Color of Law: A Forgotten History of How Our Government Segregated America* (New York, NY: Liverlight Publishing, 2017), 200.

Rothstein argues that even if the [affirmatively furthering] rule were to survive, or if a future administration reintroduces it, effective remedies for racial inequality will be unlikely unless the public is disabused of the *de facto* myth and comes to understand how government at all levels insulated our constitutional principles regarding race.<sup>15</sup>

However, Ture and Hamilton suggest there is another issue that must be faced by those committed to Black Power and the socio-economic policies of a serious progressive agenda. They indicate that there is substantial evidence that most Blacks, by a wide margin, are committed to a liberal progressive agenda.<sup>16</sup> This evidence can be seen around the country as more progressives are being elected to Congress carrying the black vote.

Ture and Hamilton further contend that innumerable surveys and electoral studies attest to this over the years. Likewise, when Blacks have had the choice between supporting a conservative black or a liberal white, the choice invariably goes to the latter. They argue there is no confusion here.<sup>17</sup> The needs of masses of Blacks required an activist government that recognizes the need for greater, not lesser, public-sector involvement; and further [better policies] are needed in terms of employment, housing, health, and human investment policies<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Rothstein, *The Color of Law: A Forgotten History of How Our Government Segregated America*, 201.

<sup>16</sup> Ture & Hamilton, *Black Power: The Politics of Liberation*, 215.

<sup>17</sup> Ture & Hamilton, *Black Power: The Politics of Liberation*, 215.

<sup>18</sup> Ture & Hamilton, *Black Power: The Politics of Liberation*, 215.

## Criminal Justice

Public policy also affects other systems, and prophetic voices are needed to ask questions related to the policing of the black man, i.e., racial disparities related to patterns of detainment, arrest, mass; and, more profoundly, the killing of unarmed black men and boys by police officers in the United States. Presently these prophetic voices include Bryan Stevenson, Mark Mauer, Fania E. Davis, and Angela J. Davis, who has sounded the alarm in terms of race and justice. There need to be more prophetic voices from the Black Church in relation to restorative justice.

According to Fania E. Davis, the field of restorative justice arose in the mid-1970s in the United States out of this perfection with the dysfunction of our prevailing justice system in an effort to transform the way we think about and do justice.<sup>19</sup> Davis further argues:

During its first 40 years, however, restorative justice (RJ) the community largely failed to address race, quite surprisingly given that it is people of color who overwhelmingly bear the brunt of the horrific inequities of our nation's criminal justice system, past and present. Just as the restorative justice community has historically failed to adopt a racial or social justice stance, few racial justice activists embrace restorative justice.<sup>20</sup>

The work of Angela Davis and Michelle Alexander has helped to open our eyes.

In her book, *Policing the Black Man*, Angela Davis brings together scholars that explore the different ways the criminal justice system has impacted the lives of African

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<sup>19</sup> Fania E. Davis, *The Little Book of Race and Restorative Justice: Black Lives, Healing, and US Social Transformation* (New York, NY: Good Books, 2019), 1.

<sup>20</sup> Davis, *The Little Book of Race and Restorative Justice: Black Lives, Healing, and US Social Transformation*, 1–2.



American males throughout every stage of the process, from arrest to prosecution. The contributors in this work are lawyers, scholars, and practitioners who have seen these issues are close and personal.

According to Davis, the tragic killings of Trayvon Martin, Michael Brown, Eric Tamir Rice, Freddie Gray, and others served as the catalyst for this anthology.<sup>21</sup> Davis states:

But these killings also inspired the contributing authors to think about all the ways that black men are “policed” - in the broad sense of the word - heavily and harshly at every step of the criminal justice process. In fact, black men are policed and treated worse than their similarly situated white counterparts at every step of the criminal justice system, from arrests through sentencing.<sup>22</sup>

This process of policing starts at a very early age and can begin as early as elementary and middle school. In 2011, black boys represented the greatest percentage of children placed in juvenile detention - 903 black boys per 100,000 were sent to detention compared to 125 black girls.<sup>23</sup> A Rhode Island study found that black boys were 9.3 times more likely to spend time in juvenile detention than white boys.<sup>24</sup> While black students represent only 16% of student enrollment, they represent 27% of students referred to law

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<sup>21</sup> Angela J Davis, ed. *Policing the Black Man: Arrests, Prosecution, and Imprisonment* (Washington, DC: Vintage Books, 2017), xiii.

<sup>22</sup> Davis, ed. *Policing the Black Man: Arrests, Prosecution, and Imprisonment*, xiii.

<sup>23</sup> Davis, ed. *Policing the Black Man: Arrests, Prosecution, and Imprisonment*, xiv.

<sup>24</sup> Davis, ed. *Policing the Black Man: Arrests, Prosecution, and Imprisonment*, xv.

enforcement, and thirty-one percent of students objected to in-school arrests. Black male students alone make up eighteen percent of all referrals and arrests.<sup>25</sup>

Michelle Alexander, in her book, *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Color Blindness*, like Angela Davis, provides a similar view of the criminal justice system. However, her work is much more comprehensive and gives a greater panoramic view historically. Alexander's work focuses more on the public policy implications of this issue. Her primary concern is the development of a new racial caste system and particularly the mass incarceration of people of color and the persistent racial inequity in the criminal justice system.

Alexander offers studies of racial profiling that have shown that police do exercise their discretion regarding whom to stop and search in the drug war in a highly discriminatory manner. Not only do police discriminate in their determinations regarding where to waste the war, but they also discriminate in their judgments regarding whom to target outside of the ghetto's visible walls.<sup>26</sup>

In addition, Alexander's work reveals the following data:

In New Jersey, the data show that only 15 percent of all drivers on the New Jersey Turnpike were racial minorities, yet 42 percent of all stops and 73 percent of all the rest or black motorists - despite the fact that Blacks and whites violated traffic laws at almost exactly the same rate. While radar stops were relatively consistent with the percentage of minority violators, discretionary stops made by officers involved and drug interdiction resulted in double the number of minority stops.<sup>[98]</sup> A subsequent study conducted by the attorney general of New Jersey found that searches on the Turnpike were even more discriminatory

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<sup>25</sup> Michelle Alexander, *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Color Blindness* (New York: The New Press, 2020), 166.

<sup>26</sup> Alexander, *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Color Blindness*, 167.

than initial stops – 77 percent of all consent searches were of minorities. The Maryland studies produced similar results: African Americans comprise only 17 percent of drivers along the stretch of I-95 outside of Baltimore, yet they were 70 percent of those who were stopped and searched.<sup>27</sup>

However, only twenty-one percent of all drivers along that stretch of highway were racial minorities (Latinos, Asians, and African Americans). Yet, those groups comprise nearly 80 percent of those pulled over and searched. What most surprised analysts were that in both studies, whites were actually *more likely* than people of color to be carrying illegal drugs or contraband in their vehicles.<sup>28</sup> Alexander further states:

In fact, in New Jersey, whites were most or almost twice as likely to be found with illegal drugs or contraband as African Americans and five times as likely to be found with contraband as Latinos.[100] Overwatch or more likely to be guilty of carrying drugs, they were far less likely to be viewed as suspicious, resulting in relatively few stops, searches, and arrests of whites. The former New Jersey attorney general dubbed this phenomenon the “circular illogical of racial profiling.”<sup>29</sup>

She concludes the disproportionate imprisonment of people of color was, in part, a product of racial profiling - not a justification for it. In the years following the release of the New Jersey and Maryland data, dozens of other studies of racial profiling have been conducted [yielding similar results].<sup>30</sup> Angela Davis shares a perspective of profiling in a different way. Under the guise of “reasonable articulable suspicion,” police stop black boys on the vaguest of descriptions. Black boys are running. Two black males in jeans,

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<sup>27</sup> Alexander, *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Color Blindness*, 167.

<sup>28</sup> Alexander, *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Color Blindness*, 167.

<sup>29</sup> Alexander, *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Color Blindness*, 167.

<sup>30</sup> Davis, ed. *Policing the Black Man: Arrests, Prosecution, and Imprisonment*, 69.

one in a gray hoodie. Black male in athletic gear. Black male with a bicycle.<sup>31</sup> This kind of racial profiling creates. Please stops involving black boys are routinely initiated by some physical contact such as grabbing, pushing, shoving, pulling, or tackling the youth to the ground. Once on the ground, black boys are often held down by multiple officers.<sup>32</sup>

According to Davis, the alarming reality is that (as currently interpreted) few, if any, constitutional sanctions prevent the practice of signaling out young black men for suspicion of an investigation. Davis suggests it is time for more of the community to join this long-running scholarly conversation around this issue. She argues that racial profiling creates more societal harm than benefit. The practice is detrimental even when it is not motivated by racial hatred.<sup>33</sup>

With this kind of over-policing of the black community, there are certainly implications related to incarceration. Incarcerating at a rate without equality globally, the United States comprises about 5 percent of the world's population yet almost 25 percent of its prison population. In 2016, there were 2.2 million people in the nation's prisons and jails, a 500% increase over 40 years, with a total of 6.7 million people under correctional supervision. Policy changes, not crime increases, fueled [this] expansion.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Davis, ed. *Policing the Black Man: Arrests, Prosecution, and Imprisonment*, 71.

<sup>32</sup> Davis, ed. *Policing the Black Man: Arrests, Prosecution, and Imprisonment*, 97.

<sup>33</sup> Davis, *The Little Book of Race and Restorative Justice: Black Lives, Healing, and US Social Transformation*, 64.

<sup>34</sup> Davis, *The Little Book of Race and Restorative Justice: Black Lives, Healing, and US Social Transformation*, 64.

As a result, the prison industrial complex is growing. The US criminal justice system's historical roots in slavery and its' progeny are visible today in the hugely disproportionate numbers of people of color who are incarcerated. Black and Brown people are 60 percent of the US prisoners, yet only twenty percent of the general population. Blacks are six times more likely to be incarcerated than whites. One in four black men is or has been incarcerated. Though their wrongdoing levels are comparable, black boys are incarcerated at rates twenty to twenty-four times higher than white boys.<sup>35</sup>

### **Economics**

What's the arrival of the 21st Century? The black church saw mixed political results, and some pastors do not have the same confidence in politics as they once did. While others have switched from the Democratic Party and term to the Republican Party, whom they feel is more economically progressive. As a result, the new agenda of the black church has become economic development, and more churches are flexing their economic muscles to provide their communities with community development projects such as senior housing, jobs development, childcare, and entrepreneurial opportunities. Senior citizen housing opportunities.

Prophetic voices such as Reverend Charles Adams of the Hartford Memorial Baptist Church in Detroit, Michigan, view the church's local mission from a more practical position. Adams believes that it is biblical for the black church to empower the community through economic initiatives.

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<sup>35</sup> Davis, *The Little Book of Race and Restorative Justice: Black Lives, Healing, and US Social Transformation*, 64.

Christian attorney Gregory J Reed argues that economic empowerment is a reasonable response to the fact that we are presently in the world, if not of it, and being in the world requires the full armor of the faith to survive. The auxiliaries of the spiritual quests: schools, retirement homes, drug clinics, employment services, well-baby clinics, credit unions, affordable housing, and the like are also the “business” of the church because the business of the church remains what is always what it always was, ministering to the whole person and the whole community.<sup>36</sup>

Jawanza Kunjufu states that to enhance black economic development, we need families, churches, community organizations, and the media to accent and reinforce black business owners so that we can increase the number of men and women who will consider this as much of a viable option as working for Fortune 500 companies. We need more Black Chamber of Commerce organizations to stimulate black business development and encourage entrepreneurship.<sup>37</sup>

Kunjufu believes that we need African American consumers to spend a minimum of 20 percent of their income with African American businesses and become debt-free. Parents need to encourage their children to own a “good business” versus a “good job.”<sup>38</sup> He further states we need black institutions such as churches and civil rights organizations to emphasize economic development and place it high on the agenda. We

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<sup>36</sup> Gregory J Reed, *Economic Empowerment through the Church: A Blueprint for Progressive Community Development* (Portland, OR: Zondervan Publishing House, 1994), 14.

<sup>37</sup> Jawanza Kunjufu, *Black Economics: Solutions for Economic and Community Empowerment*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (New York, NY: African American Images, 2002), iii.

<sup>38</sup> Kunjufu, *Black Economics: Solutions for Economic and Community Empowerment*, iv.

are the only ethnic and racial group that has developed a political base before an economic base.<sup>39</sup> Kunjufu does not have confidence in the political process and believes that the black community and particularly the black church, must redirect energy towards community and economic development.

Reed contends that, unfortunately, economic empowerment strategies are not included in the seminary curriculums on which we rely for the training of church leadership. That problem is exasperated for black clergy who characteristically [need it] most because they have little access to...economic empowerment...in crisis situations.<sup>40</sup>

Most of the literature seems to agree that poor economic conditions contribute to an environment that perpetuates crime, poverty, and disregard for laws. Thus, what is needed in the black community is a better understanding of the political system and to engage within it more strategically. Once more leaders in the black community begin to realize the inherent connection between politics and economics, there can be a greater understanding of the impact of public policy decisions on black wealth.

Rothstein believes that the past effects of federal policy on the black community have been devastating. He argues federal government declined to build racially separate public housing in cities where segregation had not previously taken root and instead had scattered integrated developments throughout the community. Those cities might have developed less racially toxic fashion, with fewer desperate ghettos and more diverse

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<sup>39</sup> Kunjufu, *Black Economics: Solutions for Economic and Community Empowerment*, iv.

<sup>40</sup> Reed, *Economic Empowerment through the Church: A Blueprint for Progressive Community Development*, 14.

suburbs.<sup>41</sup> He contends that if the federal government had not urged suburbs to adopt exclusionary zoning laws, the white flight would have been minimized because there would have been fewer racially exclusive suburbs to which frightened homeowners could flee.<sup>42</sup>

Rothstein further argues that if the government had told developers that they could have FHA guarantees only if the homes they built were open to all, integrated working-class suburbs would likely have matured with both African Americans and whites sharing the benefits.<sup>43</sup>

Finally, Rothstein makes a stinging indictment against past federal public policy. He argues that if the federal government had not exploited the racial boundaries, it would have created Metropolitan areas by spending billions on tax breaks for single-family suburban homeowners while failing to spend adequate funds on transportation networks that could bring African Americans job opportunities, the inequity on which segregation feeds would have been diminished.<sup>44</sup> Further, he believes if federal programs were not, even to this day, reinforcing racial isolation by disproportionately directing low-income African Americans who receive housing assistance into the segregated neighborhoods that the government had previously established, we might see more inclusive

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<sup>41</sup> Rothstein, *The Color of Law: A Forgotten History of How Our Government Segregated America*, 216.

<sup>42</sup> Rothstein, *The Color of Law: A Forgotten History of How Our Government Segregated America*, 216.

<sup>43</sup> Rothstein, *The Color of Law: A Forgotten History of How Our Government Segregated America*, 216.

<sup>44</sup> Rothstein, *The Color of Law: A Forgotten History of How Our Government Segregated America*, 217.



communities. Rothstein believes undoing the effects of the de jure segregation will be incomparably difficult. To make a start, we will first have to contemplate what we have collectively done and, on behalf of our government, accept responsibility.<sup>45</sup>

Recognizing laws creating economic barriers are anti-people is important, not for analytical clarity alone but for making policy recommendations as well.<sup>46</sup> In light of this, economically, the solutions to some of the problems of upward mobility that Blacks face are relatively simple. The more difficult problem lies in the political arena: how to reduce or eliminate the power of interest groups to use the government to exclude? The broad solution to exclusion is for the U.S. Supreme Court to initiate a change.<sup>47</sup>

### Conclusion

This paper has attempted to examine the implications of interdisciplinary approaches to black theology, ecclesiology [the church], and prophetic preaching through the interrelated lenses of Black Studies, criminal justice, politics, and economics. However, throughout the research, there have been glimpses of the new prophetic voices within and outside of the Black church. In fact, 2020 has seen the emerging young leaders within the “Black Lives Matter Movement,” a movement that gained greater credibility and momentum with the unfortunate deaths of George Floyd and Brianna Taylor at the hands of police.

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<sup>45</sup> Rothstein, *The Color of Law: A Forgotten History of How Our Government Segregated America*, 217.

<sup>46</sup> Walter E. Williams, *Race & Economics: How much can be blamed on discrimination* (Hoover Institution Press), 140.

<sup>47</sup> Williams, *Race & Economics: How much can be blamed on discrimination*, 141.

During the 1960s, the church led such movements. Still, in recent decades there has been a loss of the “prophetic identity” within the Black Church, as evidenced in its silence amid a community crisis of police brutality. In short, the “prophetic witness” of the Black church has disappeared, and its’ “prophetic activism” is almost nonexistent. The research reveals the need for not just the restoration of prophetic preaching within the “church house” and community but a much-needed restoration of a “prophetic spirit” within the Black church. Even more so, the literature reveals the need for a revival of sorts that injects in a greater sense of prophetic activism into the collective ecclesiastical bloodstream of the body of Christ.

Further, the research has revealed that the church cannot do everything but must partner with other entities within the black community. The literature highlights the interdisciplinary nature of prophetic ministry and activism, particularly in the twenty-first century of the “Black Lives Matter” movement.

Maulana Karenga makes a similar observation about politics. He suggests that politics, at its best, is a collective ethical vocation to create and sustain a just and good society and world. Karenga believes there must be a framework for a public policy initiative to create a national discourse on the just and good society and the social vision and practice central to their realization. Thus, he believes that the <sup>48</sup> tradition of social justice can bring about a good and just society. Karenga believes that once African Americans fully understand this, they will view criminal justice, politics, and economics differently.

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<sup>48</sup> Karenga, *Introduction to Black Studies*, 474.

Similarly, Fania E. Davis sees restorative justice as the answer to the mass incarceration of African American males.<sup>49</sup> Jemar Tisby believes the restorative justice movement must offer more than just a social services type intervention. It must engender a new justice that transforms social relations and social structures.<sup>50</sup> Tisby contends that the church must examine its' prophetic spirit and personality, and we must admit that it tends that the American church has compromised with racism. Too many Christians have ignored, obscured, or misunderstood his history. But the excuses are gone, period, but the facts can no longer be hidden.<sup>51</sup>

Kunjufu believes that black must look to economic power and not political inclusion. He believes that we need to study successful economic ventures historically and presently in our community. We must continue to research this kind of excellence and stop painting a victim analysis of our cells. At this juncture in history, we need more case studies about families and companies even though racism and monopoly companies can succeed.<sup>52</sup>

In the final analysis, as the mission of the black church continues broadening to cover the whole spectrum of humanitarian needs within and beyond its membership, it

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<sup>49</sup> Davis, *The Little book of race and restorative justice: black lives comma healing comma and US social*, 69.

<sup>50</sup> Jemar Tisby, *The Color of Compromise: The Truth About the American Church's Complicity in Racism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Reflective), 212.

<sup>51</sup> Jemar Tisby, *The Color of Compromise: The Truth About the American Church's Complicity in Racism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Reflective), 212.

<sup>52</sup> Kunjufu, *Black Economics: Solutions for Economic and Community Empowerment*, v.

will, of course, require increasingly sophisticated leadership skills at the top.<sup>53</sup> Now, the Black Church faces its gravest challenge of all: The challenge to sustain economic empowerment, political savvy, and hard-won freedoms that came with open access to education and the legal availability of civil rights. None of the freedoms we cherish can survive in a vacuum of economic deprivation.<sup>54</sup> It is time for the restoration of our prophetic identity to take us beyond the walls of the church. Through an effort of political engagement, criminal justice reform, and economic empowerment, the church can show its prophetic voice and restore prophetic ministry to its' rightful place.

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<sup>53</sup> Reed, *Economic Empowerment through the Church: A Blueprint for Progressive Community Development*, 15.

<sup>54</sup> Reed, *Economic Empowerment through the Church: A Blueprint for Progressive Community Development*, 15.

## **CHAPTER SIX**

### **PROJECT ANALYSIS**

#### **Introduction**

The primary focus of this project has been to restore prophetic ministry within the community of Jackson and specifically the Southside Church of Jackson, Michigan, and the surrounding church community through a process of preaching, teaching, and collaborative discipleship. The weakness of the congregation has been a lack of focus on prophetic ministry within the community and even resistance when pastoral leadership engaged in any kind of prophetic ministry or community outreach. However, the strength of the Southside congregational is that biblical training has been effective in the past for enhancing and expanding theological awareness and church growth. The congregational members and the connected community respond positively to both external and community clergy who are willing to take the time to teach them patiently.

Thus, once it was observed that congregants did not understand prophetic ministry, it became essential to initiate a prophetic ministry training for the body of Christ. It was also particularly crucial considering the church's silence on police brutality and excessive force with members of the African American community nationwide and even locally. This project shows the benefits of collaborative training and discipleship related to prophetic ministry. Further, the project hopes to expose congregants to a

biblical foundation of prophetic ministry that will help them embrace and develop a theology of prophetic preaching and prophetic ministry.

### *Hypothesis*

The Southside Church congregation of Jackson, Michigan, does not have an awareness or understanding of prophetic ministry, particularly the biblical implications of Luke 4:18 and its' relationship to Matthew 25:3-46 and other related scriptures. Therefore, the hypothesis of this project is if the Southside Church congregation is taught prophetic ministry with a collaborative approach, then it is believed that the training will positively impact their awareness perceptions and increase their knowledge of the prophetic ministry.

### *Intervention*

Therefore, a Prophetic Ministry Series was developed and implemented through an eight-week training process and initiated to congregants through a Doctor of Ministry project at United Theological Seminary. There were two trainings by Dr. Kenneth Cummings, Sr, through a Zoom Seminar on Friday and Saturday. In addition, pastor Jeffery Lang, Principal Investigator of the project, provided face-to-face presentations using appropriate COVID protocols as recommended by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC). Rev. Lang planned to present three to four sermon or seminar messages, but only two were initiated based on the congregational responses. As a result, there was four messages total, with the last two messages being repeated on alternate days for congregational members who could not attend the Sunday Morning service. The

alternative training days were Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday, all at 6:00 p.m. The Sunday messages occurred at 11:00 a.m., and the congregational members were required to sign an informed consent form to be eligible to participate in the seminars and focus groups.

The process began the first two weeks of August 2021, with flyers being distributed via email, mail, church bulletin boards, Sunday morning announcements, and flyers placed in areas of the church that were visible to congregants and visitors. Informed consent forms were distributed to be signed, and the purpose was explained from the pulpit. Contextual Associates assisted with the distribution of multiple posters and in one-on-one conversations with church members to increase comfort levels with the upcoming process. In addition, the pretest was distributed to members via email and traditional mail, posted on social media, such as Facebook and Instagram. A total of 69 congregants participated in the study, out of the church membership of 97 congregants.

The first pretest was administered on August 10, 11, and 12, and the first two Zoom seminars occurred Friday, August 13 at 6:00 p.m. and Saturday, August 14 at 11:00 a.m., respectively. These were conducted by Rev. Dr. Kenneth Cummings, Sr., with Pastor Jeffery Lang serving as facilitator. The topics were “The Biblical Foundations of Prophetic Ministry” and the “History of Prophetic Ministry in the Black Church.” In addition, Pastor Lang guided the focus group discussions for both days. Three members participated Friday, August 13, and four Saturday, August 14. The next two seminars occurred Sunday, September 12, 2021, at 11:00 a.m., and September 19, 2021, at 11:00 a.m. The topics were: The Prophetic Ministry of Jesus and the Prophetic Purpose of the Church and Nehemiah’s Prophetic Ministry of Renewal, Restoration, and

Revival. The last two seminars were repeated during the week so that other congregants could have an opportunity to participate and engage in the study. See please (Appendix D) for the Prophetic Ministry Curriculum seminar/sermons/workshops from both Dr. Kenneth Cummings and Pastor Jeffery Lang.

### Prophetic Ministry Curriculum Schedule

DAY, DATE, & TIME	PRESENTER	SEMINAR/SERMON TITLE
WEEK 1 Friday, August 13, 2021, at 6:00 – 7:00 p.m.	Dr. Kenneth W. Cummings, Sr. Virtual: Zoom Seminar	<i>Biblical Foundations of Prophetic Ministry</i>
WEEK 1 Saturday, August 14, 2021, 11:00 a.m.	Dr. Kenneth W. Cummings, Sr. Virtual: Zoom Seminar	<i>The History of Prophetic Ministry in the Black Church</i>
WEEK 2 ** Sunday, September 12, 2021, at 11:00 a.m. Morning Worship	Rev. Jeffery A. Lang, Sr. Face-to-face	<i>The Prophetic Ministry of Jesus and the Prophetic Purpose of the Church</i>
WEEK 2 Tuesday, September 14, 2021, at 6:00 p.m.	Rev. Jeffery A. Lang, Sr. Face-to-face	<i>The Prophetic Ministry of Jesus and the Prophetic Purpose of the Church</i>
WEEK 2 Thursday, September 16, 2021, at 6:00 p.m.	Rev. Jeffery A. Lang, Sr. Face-to-face	<i>The Prophetic Ministry of Jesus and the Prophetic Purpose of the Church</i>
WEEK 3 ** Sunday, September 19, 2021, at 11:00 a.m. Morning Worship	Rev. Jeffery A. Lang, Sr. Face-to-face	<i>Nehemiah's Prophetic Ministry of Renewal, Restoration, and Revival</i>
WEEK 3 Tuesday, September 21, 6:00 p.m.	Rev. Jeffery A. Lang, Sr. Face-to-face	<i>Nehemiah's Prophetic Ministry of Renewal, Restoration, and Revival</i>
WEEK 3 Thursday, September 23, 2021, at 6:00 p.m.	Rev. Jeffery A. Lang, Sr. Face-to-face	<i>Nehemiah's Prophetic Ministry of Renewal, Restoration, and Revival</i>



WEEK 4 ** Sunday, September 26, 2021, at 11:00 a.m. Morning Worship	Rev. Jeffery A. Lang, Sr. Face-to-face	<i>Characteristic of Prophetic Preaching (CANCELED)</i>
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Please note the last seminar or message was canceled because some congregants were weary of the focus groups on Sunday and were uncomfortable with pre and post-tests.

### *Research Design*

The project utilized a mixed-methods model comprised of pre and post-tests, focus groups, and individual interviews. Verification of the project's approach was initiated through both pre and post-test questionnaires (See Appendix D and E) face and online, and focus group questions (See Appendix G) after each session and follow-up interviews (See Appendix G) with selected individual members done by phone. Thus, it affirms a mixed-methods approach to collecting and assessing the data.

According to John Criswell and Vicki Plano Clark in their book, *Designing and Conducting Mixed Methods Research* suggests, understanding of mixed methods data analysis begins when the researcher reviews the standard quantitative and qualitative data analysis procedures. These procedures follow the processes of research in which the investigator prepares the data for analysis, explores the data, analyzes the data to answer questions or test the research hypothesis, represents the data, and validates the data.”<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> John W. Criswell and Vicki L. Plano-Clark. *Designing and Conducting Mixed Methods Research* (Walnut, CA: Sage Publishers, 2007), 148.

Criswell and Plano-Clark further argue that specific mixed methods analysis is needed to address the mixed methods questions. A framework for understanding this analysis involves considering the procedures used in the concurrent analysis (for Triangulation and Embedded Designs) and sequential analysis (for the Explanatory, Exploratory, and Embedded Designs)<sup>2</sup> In short, the design impacts the data collection process and affirms the reliability of the instruments and the validity of data.

### *Measurement*

The primary goal of the project was to educate congregants in Prophetic Ministry while simultaneously attempting to assess the awareness and knowledge of the congregation (on the topic) based on a before and after approach to authentic findings. The first process was simply advertising through varied methods, including but not limited to flyers posted in the church and utilized on social media, that is, Facebook and Instagram (See Appendix B and C). While not every congregational member responded, those that did respond were willing participants in the process. Thus, it was essential to secure a letter of support (See Appendix B) and utilize an informed consent form (see Appendix A). Through the informed consent forms, it was noted that 69 out of 97 congregants participated in the process. Both clergy and laity participated with equal enthusiasm, but the congregation lost the desire to engage focus groups after Sunday's message by the fourth week. Thus it became necessary to conduct seminars to secure the participants needed to further the data collection process.

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<sup>2</sup> Criswell and Plano-Clark, *Designing and Conducting Mixed Methods Research* (Walnut, CA: Sage Publishers), 148.

### *Instrumentation*

The instrumentation for this project utilized a pre and post-test designed from a similar dissertation from a theology student in Grand Rapids, Michigan. The questions were designed around project teaching goals. Focus group questions were designed to be open-ended to solicit honest responses and promote dialogue and discussion with the facilitator. The Individual Interview questionnaire provided open-ended questions but solicited more specific responses from participants. Thus, the implementation depended on participants' willingness to participate and engage in the research process.

### *Stakeholders*

Significant supporters, contributors, and stakeholders in implementing this project were the following: Southside Church Staff: Ben Thomas, Trustee Board Chair, Winston Cummings, Lead Deacon for Worship, and Rev. Michael Cain, Associate Pastor for Congregational Life and Christian Education. Professional Associates: Rev. Dr. Major A. Stewart, senior pastor of Greater Mount Sinai Baptist Church in Charlotte, North Carolina, and Rev. Dr. Edward I. Fubara, Ph.D. Dean of the Business School at Campbell University in South Carolina, and advisor, Rev. Dr. Tyrone B. Martin, senior pastor of the Greater Morning Star Baptist Church in Mount Clemens, Michigan. Dr. Stewart and Dr. Martin were accommodating as both former Doctor of Ministry Students at United Theological Seminary and their familiarity with the Southside Church, providing revivals and seminars there. In addition, Dr. Stewart was strong in the qualitative research area. Dr. Fubara, a graduate of Michigan State University with a Ph.D. in Organizational Behavior, had significant strength in quantitative data.

In addition, Dr. Edward Jones of Huntsville, Alabama, and Dr. Winfred Robinson of Detroit, Michigan, were helpful in their guidance related to facilitating discussion groups within a church setting. Their advice was beneficial and allowed me to streamline a process that would have taken much longer without their guidance. In addition, Lilah Milton, our Church Clerk, despite having Breast Cancer made sure there were at least two Sundays where she provided food more safely and that chairs and tables were set up appropriately in the fellowship. This was extremely helpful when participants felt resistant to the process, and finally, members of Southside Church who thought enough of the project and their pastor to participate even up to the end.

### **Implementation**

The project was implemented within a systematic calendar, starting with the promotion of the project to the initial informed consent forms being filled out in August. The first stage of the implementation was promoting the project and securing the informed consent forms. During this two-week period, the pastor and contextual associates administered the pretest for those who had been willing to fill out the informed consent form. Project flyers were sent out multiple times and placed in the church, where they were very visible to the membership.

The title of the seminar series was the “Restoration of Prophetic Ministry Series,” with Rev. Dr. Kenneth Cummings, Sr. kicking off the event Friday, August 13 at 6:00 p.m. and Saturday, August 14 at 11:00 a.m., and the topics were: The Biblical Foundation of Prophetic Ministry and History of Prophetic Ministry in the black Church (See Appendix C, for flyer). The first two days were held via Zoom, with three participants on

the first day and four participants the next day. Participants were encouraged to invite others, especially those who have filled out informed consent forms and filled out a pretested form.

The two-day event was facilitated by Rev. Jeffery Lang, who started each seminar with prayer and a brief introduction of the project and the presenter. Once the presentation was completed, Pastor Lang initiated a discussion through a series of open-ended questions related to the material that had been presented (See Appendix D for an outline of both presentations). Once the participants were allowed to ask questions of the presenter and discuss the topic, the seminar concluded with a prayer from the facilitator, and the process was repeated Saturday morning.

The next set of seminar/sermons were conducted by Rev. Jeffery A. Lang, pastor of Southside Church and doctoral student at United Theological Seminary. Pastor Lang presented on the following weeks: September 12, 19, and 26, starting Sunday, and presenting the same message Tuesday and Thursday to a different group in the evening. Sunday seminars were conducted at the 11 a.m. worship hour and then a focus group discussion at the end. The first Sunday, the group met upstairs in the sanctuary, but by the second week, the group met in the downstairs fellowship hall, which was a much better area to facilitate the discussion.

September 12 – 16, 2021, the topic was the Prophetic Ministry of Jesus and the Prophetic Purpose of the Church (Appendix F). This was provided in sermon format on Sunday but in seminar form with a PowerPoint presentation during the week at 6:00 p.m.

September 19 – 24, 2021, the topic was originally Restoration, Renewal, and Revival through Prophetic Ministry. Still, it was modified to Nehemiah's Prophetic

Ministry of Renewal, Restoration, and Revival (Appendix F) in sermon format on Sunday, but with handouts and seminar forms with a PowerPoint presentation during the week at 6:00 p.m. During each session, a focus group discussion was initiated afterward to allow the audience to ask questions and record with consent to obtain data.

September 26 – October 1, 2021, the topic was originally the Characteristics of Prophetic Preaching. However, this sermon and seminar were canceled, and the other two workshops were repeated as more participants were selected for interviews and interviewed individually. In addition, congregational members were growing weary of the Sunday morning format that seemed to be interfering with their worship experience. As a result, only two seminars were utilized to expedite the data collection and assessment process.

### **Collection and Data Analysis**

The Prophetic Ministry Series began the research and data collection process by initiating an ongoing effort to distribute the informed consent forms (See Appendix A) and the pretest questionnaire (Appendix D) a week before the first presentation; and before every production followed. Further, the facilitator continued this process throughout the project's duration for the ongoing data collection process. As a result, both forms were distributed and completed by all participants and attendees. Contextual associates assisted in the distribution and collection of all forms, such as informed consent forms, as well as pretests and post-test questionnaires.

Both digital and physical forms were collected, organized, and categorized weekly in colored coded folders. Focus Group discussions were a significant source of

raw data that allowed the valuable researcher insight into the thinking of participants and congregational members. During the seminars that occurred during the weekdays, the focus groups became a time of fellowship and essential engagement. Further, as participants became more comfortable, they were more willing to provide data. Finally, as the process moved forward with exposure to each presentation, congregants embraced the curriculum related to the eight-week seminars.

In addition, individual interviews were a source of data collection, analysis, fellowship, and teaching. Individual respondents felt honored to be interviewed and shared their perspectives on prophetic ministry. They felt a burden to share this perspective with others within the congregation. While every church member did not participate, those who did seemed to have a greater sense of the prophetic ministry's mission. The research process yielded significant data with all instruments.

### **Outcome**

The context in which this final project was implemented is a significant and historical ministry within Jackson, Michigan. The Southside Church is positioned to continue to be an organization that influences the community through various networks such as the Southeast Ministers Association (SEMA), Martin Luther King Center, Chain Lake District Missionary Baptist Association, and the Jackson NAACP, and fellowships with other churches.

As indicated previously, out of the ninety-seven congregational members-only, sixty-nine participated in the prophetic ministry study to fill out forms and participate in workshops. This was a good number considering that only four members participated in

the initial two workshops that Dr. Kenneth Cummings provided. However, those who did not actively participate in the data collection process were still exposed to the seminars and teachings provided through the Prophetic Ministry Seminar Series. While seventy-eight members provided informed consent forms, only sixty-nine members participated in the pre and post-test survey. There were eight members that participated in the interviews out of the anticipated fifteen.

The next seminar occurred Sunday, September 12, with seventy-five members in attendance. Tuesday, September 14, there were thirty-five members in attendance on Tuesday, and twenty-nine members in attendance Thursday, September 16. Then Sunday, September 19, there were sixty-five members in attendance, thirty-three Tuesday, September 21, and forty-four in attendance Thursday, September 23. However, attendance declined Sunday, September 26, with only five members in attendance, but Tuesday, September 28, and Thursday, September 30, twenty-two members participated on both days.

Since the total participants within the eight weeks exceeded initial expectations, the sixty-nine members that engaged in the process yielded significant data. The pretest questionnaire was comprised of a total of 10 questions. For question (1), what's your age? Out of sixty-nine participants, five indicated an age of 20 or older. Five indicated 30 or older, ten indicated 40 or older, ten indicated 20 or older, and thirty-nine indicated 60 or older. For question (2), Are you male or female? Forty-nine participants indicated female, and twenty were marked, male.

For question (3), how many years have you attended the church? Nine indicate less than a year, five indicate one to three years, nine indicate four to ten years, eight



indicate eleven to twenty years, and thirty-eight indicate 21 years or longer at the church. Question (4), what is your understanding of prophetic ministry. Twenty-five participants indicated that they did not know, fifteen participants indicated preaching and teaching, twelve participants indicated spiritual gifts, twelve indicated revelation and prophecy, and five indicated community outreach and justice.

Question (5), please select one or more of the nine scriptures below that you have heard quoted by a preacher or pastor. Seventeen participants had no familiarity with the scriptures indicated. Fourteen participants were familiar with John 3:16 and Romans 10:9. Eight were familiar with John 3:16. Eight indicated being familiar with Micah 6:8. Eleven indicated they were familiar with Luke 4:18. Four participants stated that they were familiar with Proverbs 21:16, six participants indicated they were familiar with Matthew 28:19, and one participant indicated they were familiar with Jeremiah 22:3. Question (6), are you familiar with the term or concept of prophetic ministry? Yes or No. Twenty-one participants indicated yes, and forty-eight participants indicated no.

Question 7, In your opinion, which one of the five statements below describes prophetic preaching? Eleven participants indicated preaching that deals with getting to heaven; two of the participants indicated preaching that deals with personal prosperity and wealth attainment; thirty-one participants indicated preaching that deals with social justice issues and societal problems, no participants indicated preaching that is priestly in focus; and twenty-five indicates preaching that inspires and motivates people. Question 8, in your opinion, do you think it is important for the pastor to address social issues from the pulpit? Fifty indicated Yes, and nineteen indicated No.

Question 9, please indicate the issues below you believe can be addressed within the context of the scriptures or prophetic ministry? Seven participants indicated Health. Five participants indicated education. Two participants indicated economics. Thirty-three participants indicated justice. Twenty-one participants indicated the poor. Eleven participants indicated culture. Thirty-eight participants indicated racism, two participants indicated incarceration, five participants indicated none of them, and eleven participants indicated all the above.

Finally, question 10, how much do you think a prophetic ministry can influence the church and the community of believers? Twelve participants indicated one hundred percent. Six indicated eighty percent, five indicated sixty percent, five indicated forty percent, five indicated twenty percent, twenty indicated 0%, and twenty-one were not sure. The data indicate significant changes in participant attitudes, awareness, and understanding of prophetic ministry once congregants had been exposed to the training and/or engaged in the Prophetic Ministry Curriculum multiple times on Sunday and during the week.

### *Interviews*

The following are interviews with Participants A through H, and these are their responses. All participants had participated in one to two seminars and were interviewed by phone.

*Interview One: Participant A*

Question 1: “What do you remember the most about what you heard talked about this past Sunday?” Participant A responded, “Nice message, yeah, nothing specific comes to mind.” Question 2: “Did you feel you learned anything this past Sunday? If so, what?” Participant A responded, “The connections of scripture to the Old Testament and especially that connection to Isaiah 61:1, Luke 4:18, and Matthew 25. So that was good meat to me.”

Question 3: “Did the presenter help you to understand the biblical setting, such as the culture of ancient times? Do you believe you understood it like them? If so, how? If not, what could the presenter have done differently?” Participant A responded, “I would not change it, but I wouldn’t do for the school anymore. I would make it into one of your Bible Studies. You could do it like you did discipleship class.” Question 4: “Did the presenter do anything that made it harder for you to listen? If so, what?” Participant A responded, “No, I wouldn’t say that, but I think we need more handouts.”

Question 5: “What were you most interested in while the presenter was sharing their information?” Participant A responded, “I like the connections of the Old Testament and New Testament, and now Jesus wants us to help people in the community.”

Question 6: “Was the message presenter helpful to you? If so, how? If not, what could this presenter have done differently?” Participant A responded: “The scriptures you told us about were helpful, and knowing their connections was good for me to hear.”

Question 7: “What was the main idea that you got out of the presentation?”

Participant A responded, “That the Lord wants us involved in the community and helping each other.”

Question 8: “What feelings or thoughts did you have during the presentation?”

Participant A responded, “I need to study harder and pray for retention and recall in my mind.” Question 9: “In what way does the message on Sunday make you want to act, react or change?” Participant A responded, “I would have to think about it. I am not sure.”

Question 10: “Was there any part of the presenter’s message you felt was prophetic? If yes, could you explain?” Participant A responded, “There were several things. First, when God speaks, it is prophetic every time and not just at certain times? Second, “Is the prophetic just about telling the future or living a certain way? I think you should expand that or include something about it holy living.” Question 11: “Is there anything more you would like to say about the message you heard this past week?” Participant A responded, “I think this is good that you are doing. This project and lesson have been wonderful. I hope we can study it a lot more.”

### *Interview Two: Participant B*

Question 1: “What do you remember the most about what you heard talked about this past Sunday?” Participant B responded, “Mainly remembered in the discussion about our gifts, and how the Bible explains our gifts.” Question 2: “Did you feel you learned anything this past Sunday? If so, what?” Participant B responded, “I think when it comes to worship, we like it when you make it personal and not just biblical. If you can put it in the form of a story or give an example of the text.” Question 3: “Did the presenter help you understand the Bible better? If so, how? If not, what could the presenter have done differently?” Participant B responded, “Yes. Because sometimes you will give us a verse,

and then you give us an example of it. Sometimes we can read something and not realize what we are reading. But there are times when you give us a verse, and it speaks to our situation, and it speaks to what's going in the community.”

Question 4: “Did the presenter do anything that made it easier for you to listen? If so, what? If not, what could the presenter have done differently?” Participant B responded, “Yes, because you make things personal, because you can read a verse and then it feels distant, but once you explain, that makes it real to us.” Question 5: “Did the presenter do anything that made it harder for you to listen? If so, what?” Participant B responded, “No, I felt everything was explained in a way that kept me engaged.”

Question 6: “What were you most interested in while the presenter was sharing their information?” Participant B responded, “Just the basis of Prophetic Ministry, both Luke 4:18 and Matthew 25, it was very helpful hearing the perspective.” Question 7: “Was the message presenter helpful to you? If so, how? If not, what could this presenter have done differently?” Participant B responded: “Yes because I could relate it to my own life.”

Question 8: “What was the main idea that you got out of the presentation?” Participant B responded, “I understand that we are helping you understand something for school, and I think it seemed like we assessed you as a preacher. Most people like preaching, and they don't see preaching as teaching, but this was both.”

Question 9: “What feelings or thoughts did you have during the presentation?” Participant B responded, “That you were teaching me something very important, this seemed urgent, and it seemed like a class and not regular worship. You gave me more specifics than normal.”

Question 10: “Was there any part of the presenter’s message you felt was prophetic? If yes, could you explain?” Participant B responded, “Yes, when your message focused on how personal it was to each individual, their things said that no one could know except for God. So let me make it personal. I think I am at my job to deliver packages, but I am not at UPS to make money. I am at UPS to love people.”

Question 11: “In what way does the message on Sunday make you want to act, react or change?” Participant B responded, “They don’t make me want to change, but they make me not want to be afraid of who I am.” Question 12: Is there anything more you would like to say about the message you heard this past week? Participant B responded, “No, I was blessed by the messages, I feel more informed, and I believe I am supposed to be where I am.”

### *Interview Three: Participant C*

Question 1: “What do you remember the most about what you heard talked about this past Sunday?” Participant C responded, “The title is what I remember most. The Prophetic Ministry of Jesus and the Prophetic Purpose of the Church.” Question 2: “Did you feel you learned anything this past Sunday? If so, what?” Participant C responded, “That he is a message from God, update it.” Question 3: “Did the presenter help you understand the Bible better? If so, how? If not, what could the presenter have done differently?” Participant C responded, “Yes. Anytime you get the word, it always helps you understand the word better.”

Question 4: “Did the presenter help you to understand the biblical setting, such as the culture of ancient times? Do you believe you understood it like them? If so, how? If

not, what could the presenter have done differently?” Participant C responded, “Yes. It was presented in a way I understood. It went along with what I thought, but it also updated my thinking on it.” Question 5: “Did the presenter do anything that made it easier for you to listen? If so, what? If not, what could the presenter have done differently?” Participant C responded, “As far as listening, I felt I did a good job. When I think of Prophetic Ministry, I think of the church of God, and they lean heavily on prophecy. It should be more Bible-based.”

Question 6: “Did the presenter do anything that made it harder for you to listen? If so, what?” Participant C responded, “No, I do not think so, I am a preacher, and I thought the message went well. No one was sleeping, and if no one noddle off, that is a good thing.” Question 7: “What were you most interested in while the presenter was sharing their information?” Participant C responded, “I would say just the fact. That it was being updated, but it wasn’t just my idea of prophetic ministry. You shared that it was a message from God, and it was biblically based and not something from left field.”

Question 8: “Was the message presenter helpful to you? If so, how? If not, what could this presenter have done differently?” Participant C responded, “I did not find anything wrong in the message, and I found it to be helpful, especially about Christians being active in the community on behalf of God. But, uh, for me personally, I don’t like it when someone is just flinging words around. There has to be a bible-based application, and I felt you brought that to light.”

Question 9: “What was the main idea that you got out of the presentation?” Participant C responded, “The fact that when there is a prophetic word from God, that word will come true.” Question 10: “What feelings or thoughts did you have during the

presentation?” Participant C responded, “I would say, just taking in the presentation and that what we do must be led by the spirit and as far as prophecy is concerned that you really outlined the Bible. So it was kind of refreshing.”

Question 11: “In what way does the message on Sunday make you want to act, react or change?” Participant C responded, “I think for me, you need to be led by the Lord. It goes back to being led by the Holy Spirit, and we must do this to be effective.”

Question 12: “Was there any part of the presenter’s message you felt was prophetic? If yes, could you explain?” Participant C responded, “I think the message itself was prophetic because it is not something you usually hear in a Baptist church. The message was about the prophetic ministry, which was prophetic in and of itself. Had it been out of the COGIC Church, it would have been part of the norm, but in this case, it was very different.”

Question 13: “Is there anything more you would like to say about the message you heard this past week?” Participant C responded, “What comes to mind with me is that this was shared in a Baptist church. I would like to see more of a balance. There is a lot of dogma in the Baptist church, and this often quenches the spirit of God. Whereas in the church of God in Christ, they go overboard in one way or another. I think there needs to be a balance. People want something real. Prophetic ministry seems to be about can you help me now? Not fantasy. Do you really care?”

#### *Interview Four: Participant D*

Question 1: “What do you remember the most about what you heard talked about this past Sunday?” Participant D responded, “We should do more to right wrongs if



something is not the way it should be.” Question 2: “Did you feel you learned anything this past Sunday? If so, what?” Participant D responded, “That I should do more, and that I should not be afraid of criticism. We have to rewrite the injustices regardless of the consequences because God has my back.”

Question 3: “Did the presenter help you understand the Bible better? If so, how? If not, what could the presenter have done differently?” Participant D responded, “I think it enlightened me on some things. I think I did learn something new.

On the other hand, I took some things for granted—especially the Kings’ authority. I felt there was nothing you could have done differently. I think you should have pressured the audience more for their answers. I think people were afraid to speak.”

Question 4: “Did the presenter help you to understand the biblical setting, such as the culture of ancient times? Do you believe you understood it like them? If so, how? If not, what could the presenter have done differently?” Participant D responded, “The people yearned to be free again, and I didn’t understand how they could still be in Jerusalem. It should have been clarified. Old Testament history is complicated. It can be very confusing.”

Question 5: “Did the presenter do anything that made it easier for you to listen? If so, what? If not, what could the presenter have done differently?” Participant D responded, “When you explained things, that made it easier to listen. I felt people should have asked more questions.” Question 6: “Did the presenter do anything that made it harder for you to listen? If so, what?” Participant D responded, “No, it was easy to stay focused on the message. It was beneficial.” Question 7: “What were you most interested in while the presenter was sharing their information?” Participant D responded, “Seeing

how God kept his promises even though they were disobedience and regardless of who they were. Prophecy always happened; it was teaching me how the prophetic word was spoken. How the different ways a word can be provided to everyone.”

Question 8: “Was the message presenter helpful to you? If so, how? If not, what could the presenter have done differently?” Participant D responded, “Yes, it was in that it focused on spiritual gifts and that prophecy always comes true.” Question 9: “What was the main idea that you got out of the presentation?” Participant D responded. “What the prophetic word is and what it is not. It is that message that comes from God, a revelation that is given by the man and woman of God, a revelation to give to the people.”

Question 10: “What feelings or thoughts did you have during the presentation?” Participant D responded, “I had joy and sadness because we can get the truth, but we don’t know the message. Whether it was them going into exile or coming out of exile, God’s truth is revealed. Some people just won’t listen to the prophetic word. That can be saddening.” Question 11: “In what way does the message on Sunday make you want to act, react or change?” Participant D responded, “I feel like the message made me want to get the information to the other people. Why don’t people want to hear about the word? Our duty is to spread the gospel. We are living in the last days, and we are moving more towards a cashless society. We need to get the church back in the position where it should be. We need to care about others more and less about ourselves.”

Question 12: “Was there any part of the presenter’s message you felt was prophetic? If yes, could you explain?” Participant D responded, “The entire message was prophetic; we are doing what the ancient Israelites were doing. We have not obeyed God.

We need to bring more people instead of chasing them away. We must teach our young people, and I believe God is saying get it together. Nehemiah took a big chance, and you see, God was working because the king gave him permission.” Question 13: “Is there anything more you would like to say about the message you heard this past week?”

Participant D responded, “I got a lot out of the message; the message was clear about what Prophetic speaking is, and I probably will have more questions in the future. I felt it could have been longer. We got to be hungry for a word from him. I don’t understand why people say that they love God and yet do not make God a priority. This blows my mind.”

#### *Interview Five: Participant E*

Question 1: “What do you remember the most about what you heard talked about this past Sunday?” Participant E responded, “He uses God’s word to build up God’s people. To help them to rebuild the wall of Jerusalem.” Question 2: “Did you feel you learned anything this past Sunday? If so, what?” Participant E responded, “I learned there are several different ways, where the church and community can be strengthened people. I know I have the gift of help, and we may want to know what are gifts really are? It’s hard for people to change, and this message forces us to grapple with the fact that the church needs to change!”

Question 3: “Did the presenter help you understand the Bible better? If so, how? If not, what could the presenter have done differently?” Participant E responded, “Absolutely! I really learned a lot from a person’s personal experience, and it really opened my mind up to some things.” Question 4: “Did the presenter help you to

understand the biblical setting, such as the culture of ancient times? Do you believe you understood it like them? If so, how? If not, what could the presenter have done differently?” Participant E responded, “Yes, the descriptions were very good, and you made it relatable to this time setting. It made sense.”

Question 5: “Did the presenter do anything that made it easier for you to listen? If so, what? If not, what could the presenter have done differently?” Participant E responded, “Yes, by sharing personal experiences, which made this lesson more personal and more engaging.” Question 6: “Did the presenter do anything that made it harder for you to listen? If so, what?” Participant E responded, “No, nothing that I can think of right off hand.”

Question 7: “What were you most interested in while the presenter was sharing their information?” Participant E responded, “I am thinking about your experiences, and I am also relating it to my own experiences in the community.” Question 8: “Was the message presenter helpful to you? If so, how? If not, what could this presenter have done differently?” Participant E responded, “Yes, it helped me to understand what I must do. I also feel an urgency about what the church must do.” Question 9: “What was the main idea that you got out of the presentation?” Participant E responded, “What was presented really will help me to grow and that it was presented for a reason. I think the information will help the church advance and grow.”

Question 10: “What feelings or thoughts did you have during the presentation?” Participant E responded, “That I am getting something that will help me to grow, beyond that, I am not sure how to answer that?” Question 11: “In what way does the message on Sunday make you want to act, react or change?” Participant E responded, “It makes me

want to continue to grow, and it affirms that I am doing the right thing. Learning is a process, and each message has helped me to move forward.”

Question 12: “Was there any part of the presenter’s message you felt was prophetic? If yes, could you explain?” Participant E responded, “Yes. It’s all prophetic because it is coming from God and lines up with the Bible, encouraging the church to grow. Sometimes I hear about people predicting the future, or is this just something you made up in your mind, so I have a different perspective on this now.”

Question 13: “Is there anything more you would like to say about the message you heard this past week?” Participant E responded, “It was a blessing!”

#### *Interview Six: Participant F*

Question 1: “What do you remember the most about what you heard talked about this past Sunday?” Participant F responded, “What the prophetic ministry is about. I had gathered my meaning, but you confirmed things of what I thought.” Question 2: “Did you feel you learned anything this past Sunday? If so, what?” Participant F responded, “I learned a lot and the way you broke down the Old Testament and the history to bring us till now.”

Question 3: “Did the presenter help you understand the Bible better? If so, how? If not, what could the presenter have done differently?” Participant F responded, “You shared a lot of different versions of the Bible. The Message Bible. The scriptures you used were very helpful and gave some great insights. We had people on Zoom who were blessed by the word you shared.” Question 4: “Did the presenter help you to understand the biblical setting, such as the culture of ancient times? Do you believe you understood it

like them? If so, how? If not, what could the presenter have done differently?” Participant

F Response: “Yes, that’s when you broke down the history, especially with Nehemiah and why they were exiled.”

Question 5: “Did the presenter do anything that made it easier for you to listen? If so, what? If not, what could the presenter have done differently?” Participant F responded, “Yes! You are a teacher by nature. You have the ability to explain things to people regardless of their level, You always give us a back story, and we could relate to what you were saying.”

Question 6: “Did the presenter do anything that made it harder for you to listen? If so, what?” Participant F responded, “No. Everything was presented and effective.”

Question 7: “What were you most interested in while the presenter was sharing their information?” Participant F responded, “For me, I was so interested in what you were going to say about the prophetic ministry. I was very interested to see what you were going to say, and the whole presented for the entire presentation.” Question 8: “Was the message presenter helpful to you? If so, how? If not, what could this presenter have done differently?” Participant F responded, “The keys to the prophetic ministry were beneficial and the most important part for me, especially being someone who didn’t grow up in church.”

Question 9: “What was the main idea that you got out of the presentation?” Participant F responded, “The true meaning of the prophetic ministry is to exalt and edify, and it is based on the word of God.” Question 10: “What feelings or thoughts did you have during the presentation?” Participant F responded, “One of my main scriptures

is Romans 12:1-2, and you really encouraged me before you to use that scripture. We must do this daily. The entire presentation blessed me.”

Question 11: “In what way does the message on Sunday make you want to act, react or change?” Participant F responded, “It empowers me to keep going towards where I want to go, and I have learned a lot during this presentation. It continues to empower me to stay on the journey.” Question 12: “Was there any part of the presenter’s message you felt was prophetic? If yes, could you explain?” Participant F responded, “The last Tuesday when God took over, you had left the building. You were not there. Yes, you shared many relevant things to the church ministry.”

Question 13: “Is there anything more you would like to say about the message you heard this past week?” Participant F responded, “It was such an encouraging thing. I liked both messages. Please keep doing what you are doing, You are an open vessel, and your teaching has been great for me. It has been a blessing to be under your teaching.”

#### *Interview Seven: Participant G*

Question 1: “What do you remember the most about what you heard talked about this past Sunday?” Participant G responded, “One thing I learned what I saw as a prophetic ministry is very different from what I learned in the past. It is also reaching out in the community, and I never thought about viewing it from this particular perspective. So when I listen to messages now, I will be listening with a different ear.” Question 2: “Did the presenter help you understand the Bible better? If so, how? If not, what could the presenter have done differently?” Participant G responded, “Uh, it helped me better

understand the difference between the Old Testament and the New Testament and especially some specifics about Prophetic Ministry.”

Question 3: “Did the presenter help you to understand the biblical setting, such as the culture of ancient times?” Participant G responded, “I am still trying to understand the Nehemiah portion of what you understand. The Nehemiah piece was new to me. I am not sure if I understood it the way they understood it.” Question 4: “If so, how? If not, what could the presenter have done differently?” Participant G responded, “You did not need to do anything differently when you present things from the perspective of modern life and present it about what’s going on today. This helps us to see ourselves. You pointed out how the church is not doing things that we need to be about, which helped me personally and spiritually.”

Question 5: “Did the presenter do anything that made it easier for you to listen?” Participant G responded, “Yes, the PowerPoints were helpful, and using the bible scriptures and having them in the PowerPoint was extremely helpful for my learning style. Plus, you explain things that I did not understand.” Question 6: “If so, what? If not, what could the presenter have done differently?” Participant G responded, “No, everything was in place.” Question 7: “Did the presenter do anything that made it harder for you to listen? If so, what?” Participant G responded, “No, there was nothing hard about it, but it could have been more interactive. Maybe have the audience be more interactive with the presenter and the topic.”

Question 8: “What were you most interested in while the presenter was sharing their information?” Participant G responded, “Um, I was interested in how prophetic ministry can help what’s going on in the world today. It seemed like a right now word.”



Question 9: “Was the message of the presenter helpful to you? If so, how? If not, what could this presenter have done differently?” Participant G responded, “Yes. I think it kind of starts with me, in that I need to get back to work on myself spiritually. I need to get back to my ministry, and the Lord was telling me (servant) you need to get back to your job.”

Question 10: “What was the main idea that you got out of the presentation?”

Participant G responded, “The main is that we as a church need to work within our purpose to help people in this world to see God more clearly. They need to see the Lord through us and in us, which has not happened. We can’t be a church because we can’t function because we are hung up on denominational issues, and that is irrelevant, and our priorities are not in the right place.” Question 11: “What feelings or thoughts did you have during the presentation?” Participant G responded, “I felt it was very personal for me, and I felt like God was talking to me. But I also felt like why we like this are and not doing what God called us to do and speak the truth.”

Question 12: “In what way does the message on Sunday make you want to act, react or change?” Participant G responded, “It makes me want to be more committed to God, and I am at a point right now where I could care less about a church building. I would rather deal with people outside of the church and get things done rather than deal with people in the church because lives are at stake, and we don’t have time for this. One thing I appreciate about you, the pastor, is that you have been a chaplain and that you have been working with the police.”

Question 13: “Was there any part of the presenter’s message you felt was prophetic? If yes, could you explain?” Participant G responded, “Yes, um, where you

mentioned the real problems we face in the community and how we need to be engaged, that was prophetic to me. I am glad that COVID has taken us out of the building. Maybe now we will get involved in the community.”

Question 14: “Is there anything more you would like to say about the message you heard this past week?” Participant G responded, “No, just that I enjoyed them and that I felt a deep sense of conviction and that I believe it was meant for me to hear the messages that were presented. Thank you.”

#### *Interview Eight: Participant H*

Question 1: “What do you remember the most about what you heard talked about this past Sunday?” Participant H responded, “I was thinking about the week before, and I was thinking about what prophetic ministry was, and I thought prophetic ministry was strictly just for knowledge. I was enlightened about what prophetic ministry was and what it wasn’t. This was far more than what I thought it would be. I had a preconceived notion of what I thought it was. It has nothing to do with the prosperity gospel, as I had been taught. This is all about obeying God and doing what’s right, just, and fair. That tripped me out for so many reasons, especially the justice piece.” Question 2: “Did you feel you learned anything this past Sunday? If so, what?” Participant H responded, “I learned quite a bit, and the way you brought it across was helpful. You presented in a way that was plain, and you broke down the theological language into something very simple for laypersons. Everything you said, you backed it with scripture. That’s important to me.”

Question 3: “Did the presenter help you understand the Bible better? If so, how? If not, what could the presenter have done differently?” Participant H responded, “Yes, the presenter did help me to understand the Bible. There are some things we think we understand until we review language translations. I’m sort of expanding on your notes possibly. That would help. Like when you quoted, ‘The spirit of the Lord is upon me,’ you are not just teaching from a textbook but sharing the word. You were prophesying as you were sharing the revelation.” Question 4: “Did the presenter help you to understand the biblical setting, such as the culture of ancient times? Do you believe you understood it like them? If so, how? If not, what could the presenter have done differently?” Participant H responded, “Yes, you explained the history of Israel and particularly Isaiah, Nehemiah, and how God performed the deliverance of his people, and I think even see the prophecy in the Old Testament different in terms of looking at Nehemiah.”

Question 5: “Did the presenter do anything that made it easier for you to listen? If so, what? If not, what could the presenter have done differently?” Participant H responded, “Yes. It is easy to listen to you, and it is easy to understand you. You used humor, and you even brought it down to our level.” Question 6: “Did the presenter do anything that made it harder for you to listen? If so, what?” Participant H responded, “No, it was very easy to listen to the word. If there is anything I considered hard, it was trying to take notes and shouting at the same time.”

Question 7: “What were you most interested in while the presenter was sharing their information?” Participant H responded, “I really liked when you did the clarification of the prophetic purpose of the church. I never looked at Matthew 25 in that way. That was a good clarification. To be honest, I don’t want to answer that because there were so

many parts, it was hard to say. I mean, that's like saying, which part of the sweet potato pie do you like? The whole thing was good!"

Question 8: "Was the message presenter helpful to you? If so, how? If not, what could this presenter have done differently?" Participant H responded, "Yes, it was. It was helpful because it opened up my understanding of the scriptures, and now when I read Jeremiah and Nehemiah, I will read it much differently. I now see the reason why certain things took place. First, I read Jeremiah, and now I view it very recently. They are the main person (The Church) are the ones that hurt you, and we must be better for society to be better."

Question 9: "What was the main idea that you got out of the presentation?" Participant H responded, "I can't say that was the main idea because there were many ideas. I believe that I am a better person having heard that message. I feel like I know something that many people don't know, and I can't wait to share it with them. This needs to be a class for the city of Jackson, Michigan, to quote you, 'What if we could all come together?' Maybe that's the main idea, coming together to learn about prophetic ministry and do it."

Question 10: "What feelings or thoughts did you have during the presentation?" Participant H responded, "These are the feelings and thoughts I was having. Why aren't there more people here to receive this knowledge that Pastor Lang is sharing? There need to be more people to hear this message. We were ordained to hear what the preacher said. I felt anger because the event was well advertised. The world won't listen to us until we listen to God."

Question 11: “In what way does the message on Sunday make you want to act, react or change?” Participant H responded, “I want to motivate churches and preachers to come together beyond denomination. I want to grab all the ministers I know and tell them this is what prophetic ministry is! I want the body of Christ to come together again! We need to be about building God’s church and not just our own.”

Question 12: “Was there any part of the presenter’s message you felt was prophetic? If yes, could you explain?” Participant H responded, “Yes. When you began to share prophecy as you spoke. You revealed things that were relevant, and it really hit home. People really don’t believe in the spirit of God.”

Question 13: “Is there anything more you would like to say about the message you heard this past week?” Participant H responded, “I think you are a great pastor and preacher. When you speak, you speak with authority, and I believe you can speak anywhere. You can talk to the scholars, and you can go into the streets. You have academic credentials, but you also have those natural credentials too.”

### **Summary of Learning**

This project and the entire three years in the Doctor of Ministry Program at United Theological Seminary have challenged me in ways that I did not anticipate. First, this project made me realize that I had no clue what a prophetic ministry was, and as a result, I liked the understanding of prophetic preaching. Now I find I prefer to listen to prophetic preachers. My concept of prophetic preaching, particularly prophetic ministry, has changed significantly due to my UTS experience and project.

I hope to continue with this project well beyond the boundaries of the ministry context of Southside Church. I have already started extending the seminars to the larger church community and the Mid-Michigan Community in general. In addition, this project has made me more comfortable with the idea of being a prophetic preacher. I have had the label of a prophetic preacher for many years but did not understand what that meant until my experience at United Theological Seminary. It was embarrassing to realize this, but it is now a badge of honor to lead a prophetic ministry.

### *The Research*

Spiritually I have learned that when done right, prophetic preaching offers hope for a new day to come and deliberation for oppressed people through the word of God. According to Leonora Tubbs Tisdale, “Prophetic proclamation requires of the preacher a heart that breaks with the things that break God’s heart; A passion for justice in the world; The imagination, conviction, and courage to speak words from God; Humility and honesty in the preaching moment; and a strong resilience on the presence and power of the Holy Spirit.”<sup>3</sup>

In addition, Tubb-Tisdale contends, “Prophetic preaching is rooted in biblical witness: both in the testimony of the Hebrew prophets of old and in the words and deeds of the prophet Jesus Christ of Nazareth.”<sup>4</sup> She further suggests that prophetic preaching must do the following:

- Prophetic preaching is countercultural and challenges the status quo. Prophetic preaching is concerned with the evils and shortcomings of the

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<sup>3</sup> Leonora Tubbs Tisdale, *Prophetic Preaching* (Louisville, KY: Westminster Press, 2010), 10.

<sup>4</sup> Leonora Tubbs Tisdale, *Prophetic Preaching* (Louisville, KY: Westminster Press, 2010), 10.

present social order and is often more focused on corporate and public issues than on individual and personal concerns.

- Prophetic preaching requires the preacher to name both what is not God in the world (criticizing), and the new reality brought to pass in the future (energizing).
- Prophetic preaching offers hope of a new day to come and the promise of liberation to God's oppressed people.
- Prophetic preaching ignites courage in its hearers and empowers them to work to change the social order.<sup>5</sup>

### *Intensive*

The January and August Intensives held at the seminary comprised formal lectures related to specific semesters, sermons, seminars, focus group dialogues, and classroom experiences that provided opportunities for both learning and reflection. These sessions further expanded my understanding of prophetic ministry and challenged my notions of traditional theology and pastoral ministry. In addition, these sessions were often opportunities for personal spiritual formation through reflection, renewal, and even the experience of revival.

The Semester Two Intensive changed my life and ministry in some permanent and dynamic ways. Semester Two, January 27 – 31, 2020, occurred during the same week as the death of Kobe Bryant. It was a traumatic experience for the nation and those connected to the NBA and the Bryant family. However, it was a traumatic time for the black church and pastoral leaders, considering racial tension and trauma related to systemic racism. This semester exposed me to ways traumatic events affect us and how these events can impact both pastor and congregation.

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<sup>5</sup> Leonora Tubbs Tisdale, *Prophetic Preaching*, (Louisville, KY: Westminster Press, 2010), 10.

Dr. Joni Sancken provided an eye-opening presentation called “Trauma and Effects of Trauma,” where she highlighted terms and concepts, soul wounds, traumatic events, and how the practical theology of preaching can empower congregations. This is particularly true with prophetic preaching, which can affirm and give hope to those who have been traumatized by the oppression of police brutality, community violence, and microaggressions, which feels like death by a thousand cuts. Sancken’s presentation opened my eyes to the relevance of black theology, liberation theology, and the implications of these theologies in ministry related to trauma within the congregation.

According to Sancken, “While everyone will not experience trauma or even a traumatic event directly, all of us are affected by unhealed trauma. She further argues that unhealed wounds are often hidden but impact people and may carry wounds from past experiences.”<sup>6</sup> Sancken shared that the “Good News” of the gospel reminds us that God is healing our wounds, even the scars of oppression and racism. She encouraged us as spiritual leaders to remember that it is never too late for God to heal something, and the one way for congregants to receive that healing is through the preached Word of God.<sup>7</sup>

Sancken believes that preaching is a significant way to create healing amongst congregants and the local community. She argues that preaching and public ministries of the church can participate in healing. She contends that preaching and particularly prophetic preaching, can help heal congregations and communities in the following ways:

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<sup>6</sup> Joni Sancken. Lecture material from “Words that Heal Preaching, Hope to Wounded Souls,” (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 2019), Chapter one. Presentation, Plenary Session (Thursday, January 30, 2020, 8:45 a.m.).

<sup>7</sup> Joni Sancken. Lecture material from “Words that Heal Preaching Hope to Wounded Souls” (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 2019), Chapter one. Presentation, Plenary Session (Thursday, January 30, 2020, 8:45 a.m.).



- Validates the experience of survivors.
- It helps people feel less alone.
- It nurtures hope and empowers congregations to walk with those who are hurting.
- Formation of congregations that are more resilient and connected to Christ.<sup>8</sup>

This session was a game-changer for me because it provided me with insights into ways prophetic preaching could have a nurturing and positive impact on congregations and how prophetic ministry provides a theology of hope amid the crisis of racism, economic exploitation, and political instability. The trauma of the murder of George Floyd and the death of Kobe Bryant, while quite different in their context, provided the backdrop for discussions about race and culture and how people of color are treated in crisis versus their white counterparts.

Sancken shared the practical theology by providing a historical and theological view of the word “trauma” in Greek which means wound. She raised the question of whether we as spiritual leaders know the wounds in our congregations, such as homophobia, sexism, racism, and isolation of losing a loved one to a traumatic event such as a police shooting.<sup>9</sup> Marginalized are often not heard and, worse, are rarely understood amid their pain and suffering. The result is a lasting trauma.

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<sup>8</sup> Joni Sancken. Lecture material from “Words that Heal Preaching Hope to Wounded Souls” (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 2019), Chapter one. Presentation, Plenary Session (Thursday, January 30, 2020, 8:45 a.m.).

<sup>9</sup> Joni Sancken, Material from “Words that Heal Preaching Hope to Wounded Souls” (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 2019), Chapter one. Presentation, Plenary Session (Thursday, January 30, 2020, 8:45 a.m.).

A fruitful discussion about trauma brings together circumstances, specific events, and or a specific situation that creates coping responses and related behaviors. Dr. Sancken indicated that traumatic or *traumagenic* events threaten one's well-being or the well-being of loved ones. She suggested that survivors share worldviews and behaviors (cross-cultural) and further effects the whole person.<sup>10</sup> It was made clear that prophetic ministry is the vehicle for healing these wounds within the body of Christ. However, we all agreed that we must come together to admit the church is sick before we can begin the process of healing from the trauma of oppression and injustice.

### *Focus Group*

Our focus group, Prophetic Preaching, and Praxis, as I refer to it, "Triple P" or P3 as most of us called it, further affirmed many of the points made in Dr. Sacken's lecture, which for me, was a significant revelation concerning my ministry and why the prophetic ministry is so important in the twenty-first century. During our focus group sessions, Dr. Kenneth Cummings and Dr. Robert Walker would facilitate discussions and allow group members to reflect on the plenary sessions, sermons, seminars and ask questions related to papers that needed to be written.

In the Fall of 2019, Dr. Walker offered significant clarification in defining prophetic preaching and praxis, which helped me to engage my project with less confusion. According to Dr. Walker, "The Prophetic Preaching and Praxis Focus Group was created with an emphasis on addressing the relationship of hermeneutics and

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<sup>10</sup> Joni Sanckin, Material from "Words that Heal Preaching Hope to Wounded Souls" (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 2019), Chapter one. Presentation, Plenary Session (Thursday, January 30, 2020, 8:45 a.m.).

practical theology. Dr. Walker asserted that ‘praxis’ is central to the community and context we serve. He argues that praxis is the ‘practice’ of ministry, as distinguished from theory, for example, the gap between theory and praxis, the text, and the world. Thus, prophetic ministry is not theoretical but practical.”<sup>11</sup> He further contends that “Prophetic ministry allows us to engage the world beyond the walls of the church, but in a civic society where decisions are made that impact our lives through government, business, and culture.”<sup>12</sup> As students, “You are challenged to develop projects that connect the bridge between proclamation and practice within our contexts.”<sup>13</sup>

Through his intensive and scholarly lectures, Dr. Kenneth W. Cummings expanded my understanding of prophetic ministry. Dr. Cummings agreed with Dr. Walker and, during January 2020 Intensive, conducted a seminar entitled “The Dimensions of the Prophetic Life.” The purpose of this presentation was to develop a theology of prophetic elements against the backdrop of the life of the Hebrew prophets and the teachings of Jesus; And to highlight what ethical and faith implications it holds for people of faith as disciples of Jesus Christ as they seek to transform the world.<sup>14</sup>

Cummings defined Prophecy in accordance with (Peloubet’s Bible Dictionary, 1971), which states, “The Hebrew word for prophet is *nabi*, which means one who

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<sup>11</sup> Robert C. Walker, “Prophetic Preaching and Praxis Focus Group,” Personal notes, Fall Intensive United Theological Seminary, Dayton, Ohio (October 23, 2019).

<sup>12</sup> Robert C. Walker, “Prophetic Preaching and Praxis Focus Group,” personal notes, Fall Intensive United Theological Seminary, Dayton, Ohio (October 23, 2019).

<sup>13</sup> Robert C. Walker, “Prophetic Preaching and Praxis Focus Group,” Personal notes, Fall Intensive United Theological Seminary, Dayton, Ohio (October 23, 2019).

<sup>14</sup> Kenneth Cummings, Sr., Prophetic Preaching and Praxis Focus Group, PowerPoint Presentation, “Dimensions of the Prophetic Life,” United Theological Seminary, Dayton, Ohio, Semester 2, Spring Intensive (January 30, 2020).

announces or brings a message from God.” Professor Cummings goes on to state, “Revealing the future was only part of the role of the prophet. The prophets taught [God’s Word] and passionately reminded people of God’s law and His covenants (agreements) with His people. They pointed out sin and the consequences they would bring, calling on everyone to repent.<sup>15</sup> The point of prophecy is not to get secret knowledge of the future but to motivate us to turn back to God and be faithful to God. The major prophecies of destruction and punishment for the disobedient are connected to promises of blessings for the obedient and hope for the coming Kingdom of God.<sup>16</sup>

Dr. Cummings expressed great concern with the distortion of prophetic ministry by television evangelists, specifically prophecy. He argues, “When you distill the basic teachings of Jesus, it has to be done against the backdrop of the Hebrew faith: “Love God and neighbor.” He further teaches that the word comes from hearing from the Torah (Jewish law), the terms of the prophets, and the teachings of the scribes. These are the people who would be called Israel (or Israelites).<sup>17</sup>

Cummings contends that these were the people called out of bondage (slavery in Egypt); they wandered in the desert for a while; it was them who became federated tribes and then a nation. It was the nation that would later select to be ruled by

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<sup>15</sup> Kenneth Cummings, Sr., Prophetic Preaching and Praxis Focus Group, PowerPoint Presentation, “Dimensions of the Prophetic Life,” United Theological Seminary, Dayton, Ohio, Semester 2, Spring Intensive (January 30, 2020).

<sup>16</sup> Kenneth Cummings, Sr., Prophetic Preaching and Praxis Focus Group, PowerPoint Presentation, “Dimensions of the Prophetic Life,” United Theological Seminary, Dayton, Ohio (Semester 2, Spring Intensive (January 30, 2020).

<sup>17</sup> Kenneth Cummings, Sr., Prophetic Preaching and Praxis Focus Group, PowerPoint Presentation, “Dimensions of the Prophetic Life,” United Theological Seminary, Dayton, Ohio, Slide 2 (Semester 2, Spring Intensive: January 30, 2020).

a king (who read from the book of God's Word), and their primary focus was to obey God and focus on the welfare of the nation and all the people.<sup>18</sup>

However, in modern times this prophetic focus has been corrupted. Much of the concern and language of faith today is centered around the individual and not the people of God or the community as a collective whole. Dr. Cummings suggested that the prophetic ministry of God has been manipulated with words and phrases like prosperity, turn around, breakthrough, unlocking the future, kingdom principles, and wisdom. It may seem harmless, but a dangerous trend is taking place in the church.<sup>19</sup>

Dr. Cummings believes there needs to be a greater point of clarification because now a more deceptive gospel exists that exploits the poor. Now prosperity is spoken of as opposed to the prophetic. In many instances, "turn around" (is spoken of) not from sin, but your present fortunes and saints wait eagerly to hear about their breakthrough to financial gain. It is the mysticism of unlocking the future (again focusing on finance and personal fortune).<sup>20</sup>

There is no focus on empowering the oppressed or serving the poor. Still, now there is the theology of kingdom principles, which guide the believer for financial gain and a materialistic ministry of how to get and the "basileau *tou theo*" the Kingdom of God." Wisdom is not the one who knows how to tap into God's safety deposit box to get

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<sup>18</sup> Kenneth Cummings, Sr., Prophetic Preaching and Praxis Focus Group, PowerPoint Presentation, "Dimensions of the Prophetic Life," United Theological Seminary, Dayton, Ohio, Slide 3 (Semester 2 Spring Intensive: January 30, 2020).

<sup>19</sup> Kenneth Cummings, Sr., Prophetic Preaching and Praxis Focus Group, PowerPoint Presentation, "Dimensions of the Prophetic Life," Personal Notes, J. Lang, United Theological Seminary, Dayton, Ohio (Semester 2 Spring Intensive: January 30, 2020).

<sup>20</sup> Kenneth Cummings, Sr., Prophetic Preaching and Praxis Focus Group, PowerPoint Presentation, "Dimensions of the Prophetic Life," Semester 2 Spring Intensive: Slide 4, United Theological Seminary, Dayton, Ohio (January 30, 2020).

blessings released. Professor Cummings asks the question, “Is this not heresy and a distortion of the teachings of the Hebrew Bible and the teachings of Jesus?”<sup>21</sup>

According to Cummings, one of the things that are sorely needed in the church is restoring the element and dimension of the prophetic to its rightful place. Sadly, when one considers the number of persons who have media ministry on television and radio, few have a true prophetic word, as demonstrated by the Hebrew prophets and teachings of Jesus, while churches with real prophetic ministries are struggling with finances.<sup>22</sup>

### *Final Project*

As a result of the influence and guidance of mentors and the research process, I experienced a spiritual formation that gave birth to a desire to restore the presence of prophetic ministry in the church. This gave birth to my project: “*The Restoration of Prophetic Ministry Elements in the Church through Preaching, Teaching, and Collaborative Discipleship.*” Information presented was prophetic ministry from a Biblical perspective, and it was collaborative because of the assistance of not only Dr. Kenneth Cummings as a presenter but the collaboration of the leadership team of Southside Church and the assistance of community pastors allowing me to utilize their facilities during the week when ours was not available due to COVID-19 restrictions.

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<sup>21</sup> Kenneth Cummings, Sr., Prophetic Preaching and Praxis Focus Group, PowerPoint Presentation, “Dimensions of the Prophetic Life,” Semester 2 Spring Intensive: Slide 4, United Theological Seminary, Dayton, Ohio (January 30, 2020).

<sup>22</sup> Kenneth Cummings, Sr., Prophetic Preaching and Praxis Focus Group, PowerPoint Presentation, “Dimensions of the Prophetic Life,” Semester 2 Spring Intensive, United Theological Seminary, Dayton, Ohio (January 30, 2020).

The initial meetings with church leaders were fruitful and productive, with many individuals volunteering their time to assist with distributing flyers, coordinating social media activities, and calling members via cell phone to remind them of upcoming dates. In addition, the assistance of contextual associates Ben Thomas and Winston Cummings was a blessing beyond words. Further, the advice and guidance of professional associates who have conducted research in church settings, especially Dr. Major Stewart, a graduate of United Theological Seminary and a friend of Southside Church. He helped rid me of many fears and assisted with strategies related to reaching members via Facebook, Instagram, and email.

The first stage of implementation was simply deciding on dates to provide presentations and particularly how many of those presentations would be face-to-face and which ones would be via Zoom or Facebook Live! It was decided that Zoom was the more practical option, and given that many members were not comfortable with the Zoom option, only three presentations were provided via Zoom. The first presentation was provided through Zoom on August 13 and 14 by Dr. Kenneth Cummings, Sr. His seminars “The Biblical Foundation of Prophetic Ministry” and “The History of Prophetic Ministry in the Black Church,” while not well attended, were well received, and quickly, word of mouth helped kick off the project. Prior to Dr. Cummings providing presentations, there was the task of administering pretests on Sunday and during the week.

Additional pretests were administered the Sunday after Dr. Cummings’ presentation and filled out informed consent forms. This became an ongoing task for individuals joining the study late, and contextual associates helped with that task and

provided feedback on what they heard from congregants. Posting and dissemination of flyers were also ongoing. This was done in Southside Church to Southside members, Second Baptist Church, and Oasis of Love Full Gospel Church when we needed to use their facilities. Each week refreshments were provided for face-to-face seminars.

The initial plan was to provide three to four seminars, but this changed as some members became uncomfortable with the process, and only two additional workshops were provided. These were taught by Pastor Jeffery A. Lang. The first workshop/seminar was entitled “The Prophetic Ministry of Jesus Christ, and the Prophetic Purpose of the Church,” and the second was entitled “Nehemiah’s Prophetic Ministry of Renewal, Restoration, and Revival.” Both seminars were provided multiple times over eight weeks. The last seminar, “Characteristic of Prophetic Preaching,” was not utilized.

The goal of these four seminars was to provide congregants an opportunity to hear teaching related to prophetic ministry in a directed and coordinated manner. The strategy proved effective as members actively engaged in the process became more aware of what prophetic ministry is and not. The perspective of those who participated in the seminars has been significantly impacted by their exposure to this teaching on Prophetic Ministry. The project was presented as, The Prophetic Ministry Series, the titles of the presentations were placed on the flyers. During the seminars that answered crucial questions for attendees and others who did not ask questions, they felt extremely informed about the task of prophetic ministry, and many shared that their theology of prophetic ministry became very different because of this encounter.

The most notable difference was beyond the study when members were more comfortable asking about social issues and how the ministry could impact those issues.



Further, participants in their post-tests indicated they felt more informed about the topic of prophetic ministry and felt comfortable with the scripture references provided through the Prophetic Ministry Series Curriculum, which was simply a handout of all four presentations in Word format. In addition, several members expressed that this curriculum should become a regular part of the Christian Education Departments' training for new members.

Therefore, this would allow the project to become a permanent part of the church's effort to provide effective spiritual formation and Christian education. One participant even suggested inviting other speakers for an annual prophetic ministry conference or some sort of awareness campaign. Even though some members became uncomfortable towards the end of the study, most have a renewed sense of revival.

### **Conclusion**

This project was created because of the mandatory degree requirements for the Doctor of Ministry degree at United Theological Seminary. This three-year process was a renewal, revival, and restoration of my spiritual formation as a pastor and preacher. However, this is more than just a doctoral project. It is now a permanent part of my personal and professional ministry. It has changed the congregants and me who participated in the study. The focus groups became a time of intimate interaction with congregational members, and I learned a great deal about their perspectives which will be extremely helpful moving forward.

While I could not get a hundred percent participation, and things did not always go as planned, the study exposed significant weaknesses in my pastoral ministry. It has

shown me that I need to be intentional about training people in this area of ministry and disciple individuals who can take this on as their role in the ministry. I have never considered discipling individuals to teach prophetic ministry principles and elements to the congregation in an ongoing spiritual formation and discipleship effort.

In addition, I realized that teaching is needed, but more advanced visual and audio equipment is required as we continue to attempt to equip the saints for the work of the ministry (Ephesians 4:11-12). The utilization of PowerPoint at the other churches was eye-opening to Southside Church. They were able to experience their pastor's more scholarly side, and they enjoyed it. Laptops and screens are now something the congregation is willing to invest in and make a permanent part of the ministry. It has brought to the table more than just a need for scriptural teaching but a desire to grow.

While I have utilized PowerPoint presentations in my secular career as a college instructor, I have not utilized this medium in the teaching and preaching at Southside Church. Still, now there is a desire for it. Further, three areas helped the project to be successful: (1) Contextual Organization, (2) Contextual Partnership, and (3) Contextual Contribution through resources and focus group dialogue. Finally, an unintended outcome is a new appreciation for the pastor as a teacher and a leader. Many congregants repeatedly thanked me for the project and particularly the teaching curriculum that resulted from it.

### **Positive Points**

- (1). The participants engaged in the study were enthusiastic and enjoyed each session.
- (2) Participants increased their biblical literacy, particularly their awareness and understanding of prophetic ministry.
- (3). Participants are more aware of scripture related to prophetic ministry and more likely to participate in prophetic ministry practices, and
- (4). Participants talked about the experience with others and shared what they learned.

The project has already garnered interest from the Jackson community. The project has also garnered interest from the Rev. Bryant Bacon, the new Moderator of the Chain-Lake District Missionary Baptist Association, Inc., and Dr. Craig Tatum, President of the Congress of Christian Education for the Wolverine State Baptist Convention, Inc. These two organizations are requesting prophetic ministry seminars during 2022 and 2023. In addition, the Rev. Darius Williams, Pastor of Second Missionary Baptist Church, and Pastor Corey Pryor, of the Oasis of Love Full Gospel Church have requested seminars for their congregations. As interest grows in the Prophetic Ministry Seminar Series, the hope is that the project will be replicated, not as an academic study but as a ministry endeavor.

I am hoping to educate the body of Christ in the area of prophetic ministry so that we can restore what Dr. Cummings calls “The Elements and Dimensions of the Prophetic” within the twenty-first-century church. According to Cummings, these consist of four areas: (1) The Prophetic as a Life of Holiness (worship); (2) The Prophetic as Declaratory; (3) The Prophetic of Challenging Systems that Destroy Life; and (4) The Prophetic and its Public Policy Dimension.<sup>23</sup>

My focus was on this idea of “holy” as a lifestyle. Cummings noted variations of holiness in the Bible 670 times, and the word Holy is found in the New Testament 180 times. Hence, there seems to be a significant connection between the prophetic and holy. Generally speaking, it is related to ceremonial worship or living an ethical lifestyle based

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<sup>23</sup> Kenneth Cummings, Sr., Prophetic Preaching and Praxis Focus Group, PowerPoint Presentation, “Dimensions of the Prophetic Life,” Semester 2 Spring Intensive: Slide 6, United Theological Seminary, Dayton, Ohio (January 30, 2020).

on the standards of God.<sup>24</sup> So simply put, for the prophetic preacher, it means living by God's word and standard regardless of the cost. This embraced standard by Jesus in Luke 4:18 seems expected of God's people in Matthew 25 and even in the hearts of men and women in Matthew 15:17–20.

This ethical guiding standard of holiness has been the heartbeat of my project and is why I developed the Prophetic Ministries Series. I gained new spiritual insights from Dr. Cummings' lectures and scriptures in this area. The scripture Exodus 3:5 articulates this concept concerning God and Moses. "Then he said, 'Come no closer! Remove the sandals from your feet, for the spot the place on which you are standing on is holy ground.'"<sup>25</sup>

In Exodus 19:6, the Lord states, "You will be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation," and in Leviticus 19:2, God says, "You will be holy and distinct from other nations." Thus, holiness is essential to connecting to God in the Old Testament, and those who follow God must embrace the prophetic life as one of holiness. Further, I found it interesting that Dr. Cummings suggested that we can view holiness as a biblical motif and imperative, but the Bible states it this way, "*For it is written, 'You shall be holy, for I am holy'*" (I Peter 1:16).<sup>26</sup>

Above all else, this project has made me realize that true holiness concerning prophetic ministry is bracing God's standard and showing the world that standard by

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<sup>24</sup> Kenneth Cummings, Sr., Prophetic Preaching and Praxis Focus Group, PowerPoint Presentation, "Dimensions of the Prophetic Life," Semester 2 Spring Intensive: Slide 6, United Theological Seminary, Dayton, Ohio (January 30, 2020).

<sup>25</sup> I Peter 1:16 (New Revised Standard Version).

<sup>26</sup> I Peter 1:16 (New Revised Standard Version).

serving and empowering the vulnerable populations in our nation and the world. The prophetic as declaratory means we must embrace what thus says the Lord. My passion and desire to embrace prophesying as speaking to and not just speaking over. Hence, in living out the purpose of the Five-Fold Ministries and the Gifts of the Holy Spirt, it is articulated in Ephesians 4:12 and following the example of Jesus in Luke 4:18.

**APPENDIX A**  
**INFORMED CONSENT FORM**

## INFORMED CONSENT FORM

You are invited to take part in the qualitative research study of Restoration of Prophetic Ministry in the Black Church through Preaching, Teaching, and Collaborative Discipleship within the Southside Church of Jackson, Michigan. The researcher invites you to describe your views and personal experiences of prophetic ministry. This form is part of a process called “informed consent” for the study being conducted by a researcher named Jeffery A. Lang Sr., who is a doctoral student at United Theological Seminary.

### *Background Information:*

The purpose of this case study is to examine African American participant’s awareness, perceptions, and understanding of Prophetic Ministry through hearing a series of sermons and/or seminar messages and to provide data and feedback on specific messages.

### *Procedures:*

By signing this consent form, you are giving permission to participate voluntarily in a survey, focus group, and/or one-on-one interview. The one-on-one interview will focus on your engagement and/or involvement in the sermon or seminar presentation.

Your active participation will include:

- A complete explanation of the study and this consent form will be given to each participant.
- The one-on-one interview process will take place at a location chosen by the interviewee and will take up to an hour.
- The one-on-one interview will be audiotaped; you can request the audio tape be stopped any time throughout the interview and/or refuse to be audio taped.
- You may refuse to participate or withdraw your participation at any time from this study.
- Participants will be given an opportunity to check data collection results for accuracy and provided with data results during a large group meeting.

### *Voluntary Nature of the Study:*

This research study is totally voluntary on the part of the participant, and there will be no compensation stipends awarded to participants. Everyone will respect your decision of whether or not you choose to be in the study. No one will treat you any differently if you decide not to be a part of the study. Participants must be at least 18 years of age and must have been involved with the black church in some capacity in the last six months. If you decide to join the study now, you can still change your mind later, and you may stop at any time.

### *Risks /discomforts and Benefits:*

Being in this type of study involves some risk of the minor discomfort experienced from revealing personal information or personal opinions related to your engagement in the sermon or seminar. You are able to take a break at any point during the interview process; you are also able to refuse to answer any questions that make you uncomfortable. The researcher will then proceed to the following questions. If, for some reason, you cannot complete or finish answering the research questions, you are going to

be excused without any further questions asked. Your participation in this study may contribute to the larger community having a better understanding of the impact of prophetic preaching and praxis in the African American church and community.

*Recording:*

Again, individual interviews will be audio taped. Only the researcher will have access to audio tape recordings. The recordings will be transcribed (typed word for word) and deleted once the typed transcripts are checked for accuracy. Transcripts of your interview may be reproduced in whole or in part for use in presentations or written products related to the study. Neither your name nor any other identifying information (such as your voice) will be used in presentations or in written products resulting from this study. Immediately following the interview, you will be given the opportunity to have the recording deleted if you wish to withdraw your consent to participate in this study. By consenting to the researcher's recording, you agree to have your interview recorded, to have the recording transcribed, and to the use of the written transcript in presentations and written products.

*Privacy:*

Any information you provide will be kept as a password-protected file. Access to information will be limited to the researcher, the research committee, Institutional Review Board, and United Theological Seminary. The researcher will not use your personal information for any purposes outside of this research project. In addition, the researcher will not include your name or anything else that could identify you in the study reports. All research data for this study will be kept in password-protected files at the primary researcher's United Theological Seminary address after completing the data collection. Transcripts of your interview may be reproduced in whole or in part for use in presentations or written products related to the study. Data will be kept for a period of at least five years or as required by the seminary.

*Contacts and Questions:*

You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you may contact the researcher via email at PastorJALang9@gmail.com or (517) 402-8077. If you want to talk privately about your rights as a participant, contact United Theological Seminary representative, Dr. \_\_\_\_\_ at 937-529-2201 or irb@united.edu

*Statement of Consent:*

I have read the above information, and I feel that, I, understand the study well enough to make a decision about my involvement. By signing below I understand that I agree to the terms described above.

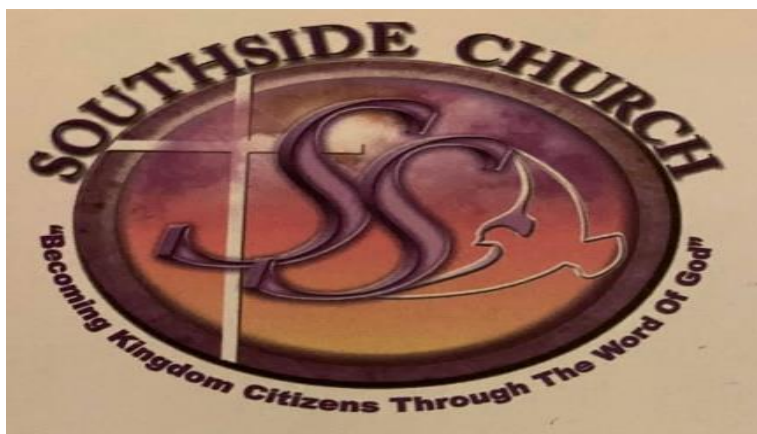
Printed Name of Participant: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Consent: \_\_\_\_\_ Participant's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Researcher's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_



**APPENDIX B**  
LETTER OF SUPPORT



Rev. Jeffery A. Lang Rev. Michael L. Cain

Senior Pastor  
Church Clerk

Associate Pastor

Winston Cummings  
Milton  
Lead Deacon for Worship

Ben Thomas

Trustee Chair

Lilah

August 12, 2021

Dear Pastor Lang and Doctoral Committee:

We have been thoroughly informed about the upcoming study entitled, *"Restoration of Prophetic Ministry in the Black Church through Preaching, Teaching, and Collaborative Discipleship,"* for the United Theological Seminary as a Doctor of Ministry project for our Pastor, Rev. Jeffery A Lang. We understand that the project duration is *August 12 through October 9, 2021*, and will occur Sundays, at 11:00 a.m., with possible alternative days that will occur on Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday, and, along with some virtual seminars.

On behalf of the official board of Southside Church and a Contextual Associate want to offer this letter of support for this project. With that, we plan to offer our facilities to be utilized for face-to-face and virtual seminars, when appropriate, provide food and encourage members to fill out any surveys and questionnaires that may be involved in the process. We will also assist in promoting this project by posting flyers in the church and on social media. In addition, we have contacted both Oasis of Love FG Church and the Second Baptist Church in the event COVID-19 prevents us from providing face-to-face opportunities.

We look forward to being a part of this process and are excited that you have chosen our church body for these trainings. Thank you and best wishes from the official board of the Southside Church. Please feel free to contact us at 517-789-6202, and my cell number is 517-414-4344.

Respectfully Submitted,

*Ben Thomas*

Ben Thomas  
Trustee Board Chairman

**APPENDIX C**  
**PROMOTIONAL MATERIAL**

SOUTHSIDE CHURCH OF JACKSON, MI  
is hosting two Zoom Seminars



Rev. Jeffery A Lang  
Senior Pastor



Presenter:  
Rev. Dr. Kenneth Cummings, Sr.

**Friday, August 13th, 6:00 PM**  
**Biblical Foundations of Prophetic Ministry**

**Saturday, August 14th, 11:00 AM**  
**History of Prophetic Ministry in the Black Church**

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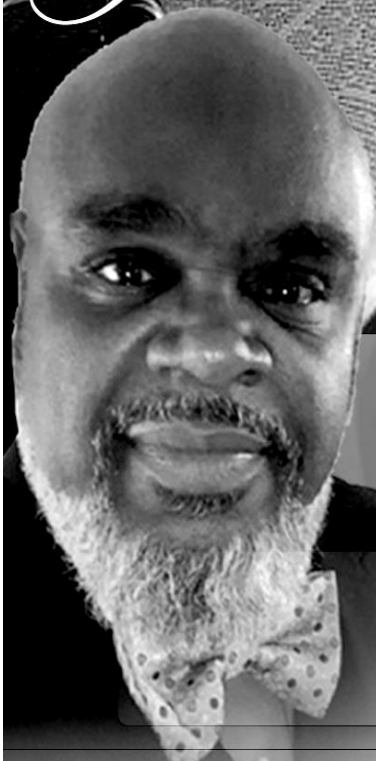
ID: 755 789 689 6842  
Passcode: 1Ws2UM

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Rev. Jeffery A Lang, Host Pastor and Facilitator

**SOUTHSIDE CHURCH**  
419 East High Street, Jackson, MI  
For More Info call 517-789-6202

# RESTORATION of PROPHETIC MINISTRY Series



Sunday, September 12th 11:00 AM

*"The Prophetic Ministry of Jesus and  
the Prophetic Purpose of the Church"*

Sunday, September 19th, 11:00 AM

*"Renewal, Restoration, and Revival  
through Prophetic Ministry"*

Pastor Jeffery A. Lang  
Seminar Presenter

Sunday, September 26th, 11:00 AM

*"Characteristics of Prophetic  
Preaching"*



We Look Forward To Seeing Everyone

## SOUTHSIDE CHURCH

419 East High Street, Jackson, MI  
For More Info call (517) 862-6568

**APPENDIX D**  
**PRE-TEST QUESTIONNAIRE**

### Pre-Test Questionnaire

This questionnaire was prepared for a qualitative case study entitled “*Restoration of Prophetic Ministry Elements in the Black Church through Preaching, Teaching, and Collaborative Discipleship*” and is not purposed to collect any other information. The content of this questionnaire will only be used for data collection purposes related to this project. Please read the following questions and please make sure to mark only one of the relevant examples. If you have any other opinions, please write your opinion in the remark columns. Thank you. Note: Please be honest and read the questions carefully.

1. What is your age range?

- ① 20s ② 30s ③ 40s ④ 50s ⑤ 60s or older

2. What is your gender?

- ① Female  
② Male

3. How many years have you been attending the church?

- ① Less than one year ② 1-3 years ③ 4-10 years ④ 11-20 years ⑤ 21 years or longer

4. What is your understanding of “Prophetic Ministry” in the Bible? In your own words, how would you define prophetic ministry in the local church? (Use the back page if needed)

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5. Please select one or more of the nine scriptures below that you have heard quoted by a preacher or pastor? Please select only the ones that you are most familiar with?

- ① Isaiah 1:17  
② John 3:16  
③ Micah 6:8  
④ Luke 4:18  
⑤ Proverbs 21:16  
⑥ Matthew 28:19  
⑦ Jeremiah 22:3  
⑧ Romans 10:9  
⑨ Isaiah 61:8

6. Are you familiar with the term or concept, or idea of prophetic ministry? Yes or No

If yes, please explain your understanding of the term?

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7. In your opinion, which one of the five statements below described prophetic preaching?

- ① Preaching that deals with only getting to heaven?
- ② Preaching that deals with personal prosperity and wealth attainment?
- ③ Preaching that deals with the social justice issues and/or societal problems?
- ④ Preaching that is priestly in focus?
- ⑤ Preaching that inspires and motivates people?

8. In your opinion, do you think it is important for the pastor to address social issues from pulpit? Yes, or No, could you share why or why not?

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9. Please indicate the issues below you believe can be addressed within the context of the Scriptures and/or Prophetic Ministry?

- ① Health
- ② Education
- ③ Economics
- ④ Justice
- ⑤ The Poor
- ⑥ Culture
- ⑦ Racism
- ⑧ Incarceration
- ⑨ None of them
- ⑩ All the above and others such as: (list them on the line below others.)

---

How much do you think a “Prophetic Ministry” can influence the church and the community of believers?

- ① 100 percent
- ② 80 percent
- ③ 60 percent



- ④ 40 percent
- ⑤ 20 percent
- ⑥ 0 percent
- ⑦ Not sure

Thank you for your sincere answers.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Larson, *Prophetic Preaching*, 10.

**APPENDIX E**  
**POST-TEST**

## Post Test Survey

### Questionnaire:

This questionnaire was prepared for a qualitative case study entitled “*Restoration of Prophetic Preaching in the Black Church through Preaching, Teaching & Collaborative Discipleship*” and is not purposed for the collection of any other information. The content of this questionnaire will only be used for data collection purposes related to this project. Please read the following questions and please make sure to mark only those items or relevant examples. If you have any other opinions, please write your opinion in the remark columns. Thank you. Note: Please be honest and read the questions carefully.

1. What is your understanding of “Prophetic Ministry” in the Bible? In your own words, how would you define prophetic ministry in the local church? (Use the back page if needed)

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2. Please select one or more of the nine scriptures below that have you heard quoted by a preacher or pastor? Please select only the ones that you are most familiar with?

- ① Isaiah 1:17
- ② John 3:16
- ③ Micah 6:8
- ④ Luke 4:18
- ⑤ Proverbs 21:16
- ⑥ Matthew 28:19
- ⑦ Jeremiah 22:3
- ⑧ Romans 10:9
- ⑨ Isaiah 61:8

3. Are you familiar with the term or concept, or idea of prophetic ministry? Yes or No  
If yes, please explain your understanding of this term?

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4. In your opinion, which one of the five statements below described prophetic preaching?

- ① Preaching deals with getting into heaven only.

- ② Preaching deals with personal prosperity and wealth attainment.
- ③ Preaching that deals with social justice issues and societal problems.
- ④ Preaching that is priestly in focus.
- ⑤ Preaching that inspires and motivates people.

6. In your opinion, do you think it is important for the pastor to address social issues from pulpit? Yes or No, could you share why or why not?

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7. Which style of preaching do you prefer? (Please select only one)

- ① Preaching that focuses on the text of the Bible making it easier understand.
- ② Preaching that utilizes diverse materials and data.
- ③ Preaching filled with the preacher's wits and humors.
- ④ Preaching that provides applications to personal life and challenges.
- ⑤ Preaching that provides biblical viewpoints (solutions) related to social justice issues and society?

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Please indicate the issues below you believe can be addressed within the context of Scriptures and Prophetic Ministry?

- ① health
  - ② education
  - ③ economics
  - ④ justice
  - ⑤ the poor
  - ⑥ culture
  - ⑦ racism
  - ⑧ incarceration
  - ⑨ None of them
  - ⑩ All the above and others such as: (list them on the line below)
- others \_\_\_\_\_

9. How much do you think a “Prophetic Ministry” can influence the church and the community of believers?

- ① 100 percent, ② 80 percent, ③ 60 percent, ④ 40 percent, ⑤ 20 percent,
- ⑥ 0 percent, or ⑦ Not sure

Thank you for your sincere answers.

**APPENDIX F**

**FOCUS GROUP GUIDE/QUESTIONS**

## Focus-Group Guidelines and Questions

Welcome and thank you for taking the time to participate in this focus group case study examining “*Restoration of Prophetic Ministry in the Black Church through Preaching, Teaching, and Collaborative Discipleship*.” Before I begin asking questions, I would like to go through a few guidelines to help facilitate our time together.

### *Guidelines:*

- There are no right or wrong answers, only different opinions.
- This is being recorded, so please speak up, and please do not talk over each another
- Use only first names or not full names.
- We do not need to agree with one another, but please be respectful of others’ opinions and views of persons. Please silence all electronic devices
- My role as moderator is to guide the discussion but please talk to each other.
- If you need further clarification at any point during the discussion, please raise your hand?
- There are two engagement questions, five exploration questions, and one exit question. However, additional questions may be asked to gain more clarity, such as:
  - o “Could you please explain what you mean by...”?
  - o “Can you say something else about...”?
  - o “Could you share an example of ...”?
- The following questions all apply to the sermon/Seminar heard on Sunday/Saturday, date.

### *Engagement Questions:*

1. What was your favorite part of the sermon/seminar, and why?
2. What character or event did you identify with the most in the sermon/seminar and why?

### *Exploration Questions:*

3. In what ways did the presenter/preacher help you understand the Bible reading that was utilized during the sermon/seminar message?
4. How was the sermon/seminar you heard helpful to you?
5. What was the main thought/idea you took away from the sermon?
6. In what way did the sermon you heard inspire you to respond?
7. What feelings, attitudes, or thoughts did the sermon provoke in you?
8. Did you notice any prophetic elements in the sermon/message? Yes or No. If yes, could you share what those elements were?

### *Exit Question:*

9. Is there anything else you would like to add about the sermon/seminar you heard?

**APPENDIX G**  
**INTERVIEW QUESTIONNAIRE**

## Interview Questionnaire

### *Personal Interview Guidelines and Questions*

Hi, person's name.

Thank you for helping the researcher out with this project. Before the researcher begins asking questions; the researcher would like to go through a few things that will be helpful for us while we are talking.

#### *Guidelines:*

- This is not a test, so don't worry there are no right or wrong answers.
- I am recording our conversation, so please talk loudly.
- I will only be using your first name while we're talking.
- Please silence all electronic devices (depends on age)
- If you need me to explain anything at any point during our conversation, just let me know?
- If I don't understand something you have said to me, I might ask more questions to help me understand, such as:
  - o Could you please explain what you mean by...?
  - o Can you say something else about...?
  - o Could you share an example of ...?

#### *Questions:*

The following questions apply to what you heard me talk about this past Sunday.

1. What do you remember the most about what you heard talked about this past Sunday?
2. Did you feel you learned anything this past Sunday? If so, what?
3. Did the presenter help you understand the Bible better? If so, how? If not, what could the presenter have done differently?
4. Did the presenter help you to understand the biblical setting, such as the culture of ancient times? Do you believe you understood it like them? If so, how? If not, what could the presenter have done differently.
5. Did the presenter do anything that made it easier for you to listen? If so, what? If not, what could the presenter have done differently?



6. Did the presenter do anything that made it harder for you to listen? If so, what?
7. What were you most interested in while the presenter shared their information?
8. Was the message presenter helpful to you? If so, how? If not, what could this presenter have done differently?
9. What was the main idea that you got out of the presentation?
10. What feelings or thoughts did you have during the presentation?
11. In what way does the message on Sunday make you want to act, react or change?
12. Was there any part of the presenter's message you felt was prophetic? If yes, could you explain?
13. Is there anything more you would like to say about the message you heard this past week?

**APPENDIX H**

**FOUR PROPHETIC MINISTRY SEMINAR CURRICULUMS**

## **The History of Prophetic Ministry in the Black Church**

Doctoral Project for Rev. Jeff Lang, Pastor of Southside Church, Jackson, Michigan,  
August 13-14, 2021

Dr. Kenneth W. Cummings, Sr., [www.kennethcummingsministries.com](http://www.kennethcummingsministries.com),  
[cummings.kenneth@gmail.com](mailto:cummings.kenneth@gmail.com) 502-229-8487

### **CURRICULUM OUTLINE**

#### **The Objective of Presentation**

This presentation is designed to share some of the pivotal areas of history where “prophetic activism” has been seen, practiced, and demonstrated by people of faith in their quest to bring about changes in society in the realm of justice and equality. Many scholars and historians use the language of “civil rights” in discussing these actions, while others use the language “human rights.” However, the impetus behind these acts and measures by many people of faith – clergy and laity alike – lies in the realm of “**the call of faith**” as understood in the message of the Hebrew prophets as recorded in Scripture and the teachings of Jesus.

#### **A Timeline of History and Prophetic Activism**

In order to give this presentation structure, **a timeline** will be used to point to some of the **eras, individuals, and organizations** that played a role in the history of prophetic witnesses that helped bring about changes in this country.

- 1. Slavery Era**
- 2. The Civil War and Emancipation**
- 3. Reconstruction**
- 4. Industrial Revolution**
- 5. Civil Rights Era (heyday)**
- 6. The 21<sup>st</sup> Century to the Present Day**

**1. Slavery Era:** Where does one attempt to start a discussion of the history of the church’s prophetic activism? I have chosen the work of E. Franklin Frazier’s book, *The Negro Church in America*, as a reference point. In this seminal work, Franklin lays out the history of how the Negro, who once were African slaves, were captured, held, transported, and enslaved in America.

**2. The Civil War and Emancipation:** Some of the individuals who played a role in liberation were already at work before the Civil War, such as Tubman and Douglas. Though these persons, and others, are referred to by historians and scholars as “freedom fighters,” though this term may be true, as people of faith, we must constantly remind others that these persons were persons of faith and that they saw their work not just through the lens of “justice” for “justice’s sake,” but as a calling rooted in their understanding of faith as people of God and that it was not God’s will that they remain in bondage.

**3. The Reconstruction Era** was a period in American history following the American Civil War; it lasted from 1865 to 1877 and marked a significant chapter in the history of civil rights in the United States.

**4. The Industrial Revolution**, in modern history, was the process of change from an agrarian and handicraft economy to one dominated by industry and machine manufacturing. These technological changes introduced novel ways of working and living and fundamentally transformed society. The Industrial Revolution was an epoch during the first 100 years of United States history where the

economy progressed from manual labor and farm labor to a greater degree of industrialization based on labor. The Industrial Revolution brought rapid urbanization or the movement of people to cities. Changes in farming, soaring population growth, and an ever-increasing demand for workers led masses of people to migrate from farms to cities. Almost

**5. Civil Rights Era (heyday)** a Fair Housing Act for working-class people, a *Brown v. Board of Education* policy for low-income pupils, an affirmative action program in higher education for economically disadvantaged students, and an amendment to the Civil Rights Act to prohibit discrimination against workers engaged in labor organizing. Primary Information: “The Black Church: This is Our Story, This is Our Song.” This two-part documentary, airing on PBS on Feb. 16 and 17, is captivating and inspiring, weaving together history, religion, politics, and music to give viewers deep insights into Black religious and cultural expression in America

#### **6. The 21<sup>st</sup> Century to the Present Day**

Barack Obama’s presidential run. Rev. Al Sharpton: Alfred Charles Sharpton is an American civil rights activist, Baptist minister, talk show host, and politician. Sharpton is the founder of the National Action Network. In 2004, he was a candidate for the Democratic nomination for the U.S. presidential election.

Rev. William Barber (Poor People’s Coalition) William J. Barber II is an American Protestant minister and social activist. He is the President and Senior Lecturer at Repairers of the Breach and co-chair of the Poor People’s Campaign: A National Call for Moral Revival.

**Closing Summary:** I came of age in the 60s in the Black Church, listening to the music of James Brown’s “I’m Black, and I’m Proud,” the Motown sounds where my family and I attended Beulah Grove Baptist Church. I lived in a housing project, one of six children who could be disciplined by teachers in segregated schools and adult neighbors. Though economically speaking, we were poor, and I was rich in associations, friendship, and the church. The church was a place where the congregation cared about the spiritual and the social fiber. I have seared in my memory at an early age the day that Martin Luther King, Jr. was to visit my home church, Beulah Grove, one Sunday evening. The children were not permitted to attend, but my mother and father did.

**M L. King, Jr.** On March 22, 1968, just days before his assassination, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. asked about 500 Augustans attending a mass meeting at Beulah Grove Baptist Church to join him in his upcoming “people’s march” on Washington. King urged his audience to take summer vacations in the nation’s capital and join his effort. In addition, King said the federal government should de-escalate the war in Vietnam and escalate the war on poverty. The Augusta speech was the last one for King in the Deep South. He would die less than two weeks later after being fatally shot in Memphis, where he had gone to support a strike by sanitation workers. Bill Kirby, “Dr. M L King, Jr. speaks in Augusta,” *The Augusta Chronicle*, March 23, 1968, <https://www.augustachronicle.com/news/20200322/march-23-1968-dr-martin-luther-king-jr-speaks-in-augusta>.

**“Biblical Foundations of Prophetic Ministry” Doctoral Project for Rev. Jeffery A. Lang, Pastor of Southside Church, Jackson, Michigan, August 13-14, 2021**  
**Presenter: Dr. Kenneth W. Cummings, Sr. Copyrighted © 2021502-229-8487**  
**www.kennethcummingsministries.com**  
**CURRICULUM OUTLINE**

**The Objective for this Presentation:** For many heartfelt Christians, the subject of politics should not enter the realm of faith and religious practices. The heart of the gospel – many firmly believe – falls in the realm of sharing the love of Christ to a sin-sick world. This love consists in accepting Christ as Lord and Savior, the offer of forgiveness and redemption, and entering into life eternal in the Kingdom of God. **Keep politics out of it.** Like in the parable of the sower, Christ will separate the wheat from the tares on such an appointed day. While this may seem reasonable, one cannot read the story of faith that begins with the Hebrew Bible and not see how **politics is present.** This presentation will share some of the highlights and watersheds moments of biblical faith history and see how what we understand as politics are **involved or baked into Israel’s development.** I hope that after examining these measures, one will see how **politics plays an integral part in faith development in the Christian faith.**

**Toward a Definition: “Politics” Argument for Christians Staying Out of Politics:** Those who argue against politics in religion point to Romans 13:1-7, where Paul admonished the people to follow civil authority as a mandate that God installs governments. Also, many point to the argument of separation of church and state.

**More than six-in-ten Americans (63%) say churches and other houses of worship should stay out of politics.** An even higher share (76%) say these houses of worship should not endorse political candidates during elections, according to a 2019 survey. Still, more than a third of Americans (36%) say churches and other houses of worship *should* express their views on social and political matters. (The Johnson Amendment, enacted in 1954, prohibits tax-exempt institutions like churches from involvement in political campaigns on behalf of any candidate.) Dalia Fahmy, “8 facts about religion and government in the United States,” July 16, 2020, <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2020/07/16/8-facts-about-religion-and-government-in-the-united-states/>.

**Arguments for Engaging in Political Discourse:** The Holy Scriptures are full of references where the precepts, statutes of God, as revealed through the prophets, address the sins of the people that affect the health and welfare of God’s people. Thus, through these measures, we see some aspects of political discourse and action. First and Second Kings tell not only the stories of the Kings of Israel but also how God interacted with the people through the prophets. “Although Israel had many kings, **they were not the ultimate authority in Israel.** Rather, God’s covenant word was the real authority. **This is why God raised up the prophetic office to counterbalance the office of kingship.** For every king, there was an opposing prophet or group of prophets ready to stick the covenant back in the king’s face and call him to accountability to God’s word.” Tim Mackie and Whitney Woollard, “Kings vs. Prophets, Spoiler: God’s Word Always Wins the Day,” <https://bibleproject.com/blog/kings-vs-prophets/>.

### **Out of Egypt: The Call of a People/The Birth of a Nation**

One cannot **escape the inescapable** unless one does it willfully. Even with a casual look at the Old Testament, one cannot escape the fact that the nation of Israel had **its calling out of bondage** (slavery) in Egypt. God called and sent forth a deliverer, Moses, who directly challenged the people in God's name to "let the people go."

One of the first words that speak of God's character is **Deliverer**.

#### **Biblical References of God as Deliverer**

"And he said: The LORD is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer." (Psalm 18:2)

"But I am poor and needy, yet the LORD thinks upon me. You are my help and my deliverer; do not delay, O God (Psalm 40:17).

**Moses was a deliverer.** The word **deliver** also means **rescue, liberate, savior**.

**SALVATION: Its Meaning** According to the broadest meaning as used in Scripture, the term *salvation* encompasses the total work of God by which He seeks to **rescue** people from the ruin, doom, and power of sin and **bestows** upon them the wealth of His grace encompassing eternal life, provision for abundant life now, and eternal glory (Eph. 1:3-8; 2:4-10; 1 Pet. 1:3-5; John 3:16, 36; 10:10). The word "salvation" is the translation of the Greek word *Soteria*, which is derived from the word *soter*, meaning "savior." **The word "salvation" communicates the thought of deliverance, safety, preservation, soundness, restoration, and healing.** In theology, however, its major use is to denote a work of God on behalf of men and women, and as such, it is a major doctrine of the Bible which includes redemption, reconciliation, propitiation, conviction, repentance, faith, regeneration, forgiveness, justification, sanctification, preservation, and glorification. On the one hand, salvation is described as the work of God rescuing man from his lost estate. On the other hand, salvation describes the estate of a person who has been saved and who is vitally renewed and made a partaker of the inheritance of the saints.

Bible.org, s.v. "salvation," <https://bible.org/article/soteriology-doctrine-salvation>.

#### **Saved from What?**

- A. SAVED FROM EXTERNAL EVILS IN GENERAL
- B. SAVED CORPORATELY FROM ENEMIES OR IN BATTLE
- C. SAVED FROM MORAL TROUBLES
- D. SAVED FROM DOMINION OF OTHER NATIONS
- E. SAVED INDIVIDUALLY FROM ENEMIES
- F. SAVED IN PROSPERITY
- G. SAVED NATIONALLY WITH SPIRITUAL CONNOTATION

Deliverance from **temporal and physical oppression** dominates usage far more than deliverance from hell. The seven major categories of these terms that appear in the OT demonstrate the following sense of meaning: temporal physical deliverance, (1) generally from external evils, (2) corporately from enemies or in battle, (3) from moral troubles, (4) from nations' dominion, (5) physically and/or individually from enemies, (6) in prosperity, and (7) to national restoration through spiritual means. Jeroboams' golden calves. He was not attentive to the word of the Lord, and he continued to lead Israel down a path of no return.

#### **Kings vs. Prophets – Prophets versus King**

Hezekiah versus Isaiah (II Kings 18 -20) **A Road Map to Understanding Political**

#### **Implications for Faith**

- **PRACTICAL WAYS OF ENGAGEMENT IN PROPHETIC ACTIVISM**
- **CONCLUSION**

## NEHEMIAH'S Prophetic Ministry Of Renewal, Restoration, And Revival

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### CURRICULUM OUTLINE

This presentation HAS THREE GOALS they are:

- Provide the **local church** a model of prophetic ministry outreach
- Provide an **Old Testament Model** of practical theology and community development
- Provide a **biblical model of community empowerment** through prophetic ministry

### Primary scripture

“Then I said to them, ‘you see the trouble we are in: Jerusalem lies in ruins, and its’ gates have been burned with fire. **Come, let us rebuild the wall of Jerusalem, and we will no longer be in disgrace.**” I also told them about the gracious hand of my God on me and what the king had said to me. They replied, “**Let us start building.**” So, they began this good work.”

### Nehemiah 2:17–18

#### ► Scriptural support of Renewal, restoration, and revival

Both the book of **Ezra and Nehemiah** shows the difficulty and challenges of the process of spiritual renewal, restoration, and revival of God’s people.

**Nehemiah** provides the 7C’s of spiritual and community restoration:

- **COMPASSION:** Nehemiah 1:2 – 4 Nehemiah **cared enough** to inquire about his community, and he loved it so much, he grieved their situation and took it to God in prayer.
- **CONVICTION:** Nehemiah 1:5 – 11 had a sense of conviction that drove him to prayer. He cried out to God in both grief and repentance (**Nehemiah 5-10**)
- **COURAGE:** Nehemiah 2:1 – 10 **Nehemiah** took a risk... The king noticed Nehemiah's sad appearance. It surprised him to be singled out for attention and *frightened Nehemiah because it was dangerous to show sorrow before the king*. Anyone wearing sackcloth morning clothes was barred from the palace (Esther 4:2).
- **COMMITMENT:** Nehemiah 2:11 – 20 He committed by leaving the comforts of the palace (**2:11–12**)
- **COLLABORATION:** Nehemiah 3:1 – 32 They worked together **collaboratively** on the wall.
- **CRITICISM:** Nehemiah 4:1 – 23; 6:1 – 19 When Sanballat, the Hornite, and Tobiah, the Ammonite official, heard about this, they were very much disturbed that someone had come to promote the welfare of the Israelites.” Nehemiah 2:10
- **CONSECRATION:** Nehemiah 8:1 – 18; 9:1 – 38 **Returning to Worship** – this was the ultimate goal, which should be our goal in the New Testament Church today! “*Ezra praises the Lord, the great God; And all the people lifted their hands and responded. Amen! Amen!*” Then they bow down and **worship the Lord** with their faces to the ground.” (Nehemiah 8:6)

The **Book of Nehemiah** shows the fulfillment of the prophecies of Zechariah and Daniel concerning the rebuilding of Jerusalem's walls. **Nehemiah** is the last of the Old Testament historical books. It records the history of the **third return** to Jerusalem after the captivity, telling the story of how the walls were rebuilt and the people were renewed and stored in their faith.

### **The Prophetic Ministry of Jesus and The Prophetic Purpose of the Church**

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Seminar Presenter

#### CURRICULUM OUTLINE

Introduction and the Presentation Purpose

***“The Restoration of Prophetic Ministry in the Black Church through Preaching, Teaching, and Collaborative Discipleship.”***

- The presentation has **four practical and biblical goals**:
- (1) To present the Prophetic Ministry of Jesus through a **biblical lens**.
- (2) To present the Prophetic Purpose of the Church through a Biblical/Theological lens.
- (3) To provide scriptural support and understanding of the Prophetic Ministry
- (4) To expand the view of prophetic ministry in the local church

#### WHAT IS PROPHETIC MINISTRY?

- “The Hebrew word for prophet, is ‘**nabi**’ it means one who is called of announces or brings a message from God.” (*Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, 1996, *Prophet, Prophecy*. P.644) [**The Speaking prophecy**]

What is the Prophetic Ministry of Jesus? The **Prophet Isaiah** provides a glimpse into Jesus and His purpose as the Savior prophesied in the Old Testament (Isaiah 61:1-2).

- **God's purpose** for bringing Jesus into humanity was to save us, but GOD requires us to become like Christ.
- The **purpose of Jesus'** prophetic ministry comes first in the form of prophecy in the Book of Isaiah (61:1-2) and then lived out in a synagogue in Nazareth, where Jesus began his ministry Teaching in Galilee (Luke 4:14–15).
- The Primary **Prophetic Scripture** of Jesus Christ

*“The **Spirit** of the Lord is upon Me because He has **anointed** Me to **preach** the gospel to the **poor**; he has sent Me to **heal** the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and **recovery** of sight to the **blind**, To set at liberty those that are **oppressed**; To proclaim the acceptable year of the **Lord**.”*

KEY WORDS TO UNDERSTANDING the PROPHETIC MINISTRY of Jesus Christ

**The Spirit** – The spirit of the Lord or the Holy Spirit, 2. **Anointed** – God's placing of the spirit, it means to rub in or smear 3. **Preach or Proclaim** – To provide a divine announcement 4. **Good News or the Gospel** – Message of God to humanity 5.



**The Poor** – those who have less than others, this can also be spiritual and not just financial. **6. Heal the Brokenhearted** – Those who need healing, **Prisoners or Captives** – Those who are trapped or held for crimes or against their will 7. **The Oppressed** – Those who are suffering at the hands of someone else or within a system.

- The Conclusion of the Matter:
- *“Let us hear the conclusion of the matter: **Fear God** and **keep** His commandments, for this is man’s all.” (Ecclesiastes 12:13 NKJV)*

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